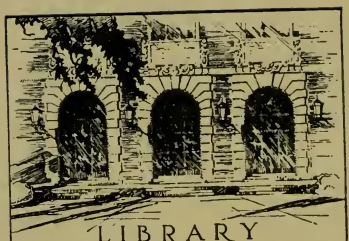

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Mariamne.

VOLUME II.

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Mariamne:

an

Historical Novel

of

Palestine.

" If you will see a pageant truly play'd,
Between the pale complexion of true love
And the red glow of scorn and proud disdain,
Go hence a little, and I shall conduct you,
If you will mark it."—AS YOU LIKE IT.

VOL. II.

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Mariamne.

CHAPTER X.

Herod left the troops to the care of the subordinate officers, and hastened to the Palace where his mother, Doris, Mariamne, and the others were waiting to receive him. There ever was, and ever will be, admiration excited in woman for a man who has displayed prowess and valour. Mariamne could not look on the young hero flushed with victory, and who had hastened to greet her, without her pulse beating quicker and feelings partaking at least of admiration and affection rising in her bosom, and to which she readily yielded, since he was her betrothed husband. She received him kindly, and courteously; her eyes told him more than she

dared to shew by her manner in the presence of Salome and Doris, who, notwithstanding the altered opinion she, in secret, had of the Princess, was unable to completely curb the natural impulse called forth by witnessing the meeting bebetween the man on whom she had fixed her affections, and the woman who had nearly deprived her of them. Gratitude, friendship, real esteem, and the dread of being abandoned for the being towards whom she bore those feelings, were all struggling in her bosom; and she watched them so intensely, that every one present noticed it.

After mutual congratulations, they separated.

Mariamne, when alone, reflected on what had lately passed; and the anticipation of sorrow possessed her mind. She was unable to dispossess it of the firm hold it had, because it was founded on reason; while the means she used to counteract its power, were composed of those delusions and hopes which mortals often permit to shut their perception against the convictions of truth and experience.

She saw her betrothed husband flushed with

conquest, and addressed as a king.—It was evident to her that his heart was revelling in all the pride of triumph, and in the attainment of even more than his daring ambition had ever hoped for. She saw him surrounded by a valiant and victorious army, befriended by the rulers of the world, and looking forward to the recapture of his city and kingdom. The power and splendor of her rank, when he should be enthroned, were known to her.

Mariamne looked for higher and nobler qualities in a husband than the possession of mere power and glory. Her refined and elevated soul clearly perceived, that power is another name for toil, and glory but a dying flame. When she compared the precepts of her religion with the practices of the priests and people, it was manifest that they were at variance. When she thought of the peace-breathing laws delivered from her God, and considered the disorder and bloodshed which had so long desolated her unhappy country, and which seemed the sport, the pastime, and chief occupation of man, she became melancholy, and almost desired to have

the wings of a dove, and fly away and be at rest, or to wander afar off and remain in the wilderderness. For a short time visions of happiness, wrought by the conduct of Herod, floated in her mind, but they soon disappeared; for she could not deceive herself. She knew he was a warrior and delighted in the hellish game; and that he sought as the greatest good, dominion, and wealth. Thoughts of Mazrah, and his heavenly doctrines, would intrude themselves. It was with difficulty she prevented herself from comparing him and his peaceful precepts with Herod and his ambitious and worldly views. When these thoughts returned with more than usual force, she wept and remembered that, by the divine law, she was a betrothed wife.

Herod, through the assistance of his mother, obtained a private interview with Mariamne, of whom he conceived even an higher opinion than he had before, for Doris and Babarrah made known to him all that had transpired during his absence. He was very desirous of explaining to her the manner in which the regal dignity had been bestowed on him, and of removing any

injurious impression the circumstance might have excited in her. It was the night before his departure with his army for Jerusalem, that his mother had left him in the apartment with the Princess. He would have yielded to all the fervour of his love, if the gentle yet commanding manner of Mariamne had not restrained him.

Mariamne had made no enquiry into the causes which led to Herod's inauguration to the regal title; but she had thought much on the effects of his advancement. Notwithstanding the close alliance which existed between them, her pride was touched at his being preferred to an Asmonean: she thought the succession to the throne should have devolved on her brother, and that Herod should have used all his influence with the Triumvirs to have secured him the crown. Before Herod commenced his explanation, she asked;

"How comes it that you have not fulfilled your promise, and obtained for Aristobulus his rightful succession?"

The gentle yet impressive dignity with which

she spoke, confused him; and he replied, with less readiness than usual;

"My beloved Mariamne, you know that my intention was to have solicited the crown for Aristobulus; but in the Senate, Antony proposed that I should be elected."

"Then you had given to you the fairest opportunity of displaying your magnanimity, and of declaring that you came to assert the right of my brother to the sceptre of Judæa, and your readiness to serve him, and become their firm ally."

"Had I affirmed your brother's right, it might have cost him his life, for the jealous Romans will not admit of such claims. Your brother shall succeed to the High Priesthood.—I shall only share the power with him, and in Judæa our titles are equal."

"Ah Herod, he should have deputed you:—he an Asmonean Prince should have raised you to bear with him the weight of empire. But now the glory of my race is gone, and never more will an Asmonean rule over Jerusalem."

Herod looked at her with astonishment, as

her head bent towards the ground, and a tear drop fell from eye, and an expression crossed her face, as if in her soul she yielded at one effort to the shipwreck of that high yet earthly pride, which had led her to expect, that by her brother their people would be reclaimed, their religion supported, and their laws maintained. Herod, with some warmth, remarked;

"You are my betrothed wife; you are of the purest Asmonean blood, and will rule over Jerusalem: while your brother presides over her priesthood and holy laws. Remember, Mariamne, you may be mother of a race who will reign after me, and raise to its ancient splendor your faded kingdom."

Mariamne, after remaining silent a short period, said;

"Herod, I believe that you intended to seek the kingdom for my brother, but wanted moral courage to reject it when offered to you. You might have acted a great and noble part, but the temptation was greater than you could resist. I know, alas, I know too well, the sway ambition holds over you. I fear that the means

you now possess of gratifying it, are greater than your virtue can direct. Of dependence on our God you seem to know but little. What guarantee have you to give me, that I and all my race will not feel its baneful consequences?"

Her eyes were fixed on his. There was neither fear, nor pride, nor anger expressed in them; but gentleness, thought, and anxiety. He was affected and not prepared for such discussion, as the chain of thoughts were dissimilar to any existing in his mind. He walked to and fro, evidently disturbed, then replied;

"How can Mariamne harbour such dreadful thoughts? You have cut me to the heart, by supposing the unsought power I have been given, will be used to injure the woman I adore, the noble race who cherished and raised my fathers. No, Mariamne, your brother as the High Priest shall reign with me: he by maintaining in purity and supporting by his virtues the divine institutions; I by superintending and enforcing the municipal laws so closely combined with them, by regulating with the strictest discipline my armies, by rewarding the deserv-

ing, and protecting all, will render Judæa more happy and prosperous than in past ages; while your wisdom and virtue will animate and cherish your people, and will lead them by your example, to walk in the paths of heaven."

As he spoke Mariamne's eye brightened, her look became intense, and the colour rose in her face, and her bosom seemed to heave with hope, and emotions of a more tender character—Herod saw the effect he had produced, and would have continued, but she spoke;

"Those thoughts are worthy of the man who seeks my love, and they emanate from principles, which if guided by piety and reason, must produce conduct worthy of a king, and worthy of even a successor to the Asmonean race."

Here her voice changed to a lower tone somewhat mingled with sorrow.

"But Herod you are not deeply tinctured with heavenly hopes, you do not look to heaven for aid. How then will you restrain your susceptible nature, your violent feelings, your quick resentments, your jealousy of power, your love of

glory, and your pride to be thought all that is great in man? Do you think that when every restraint is removed, that you will rule these powerful adversaries to your noble schemes with greater ease? Who among the potentates of the earth has done so? You are not different to them—Oh Herod, I tremble for you, my only hope is in Providence—May that God who raised you, guide and instruct you."

She bent her head, and while she wept, repeated in her mind the prayer. Herod remained silent, while various thoughts and feelings disturbed his ardent mind. He was roused from his abstracted state by the voice of Mariamne. He turned and saw her on her knee, she was agitated, and paleness was overspreading her face. He hastened to raise her; she gently prevented him, and looking on him as he stooped over her said in an imploring voice:

"Herod, I am betrothed to you. I accepted you when far removed from the regal state; my views of life but ill become one who should be your queen—Remember that Doris has by right that title, a right I never will infringe—The

glory of my race has set—I will not usurp your first wife's title to the dignity of queen, I will not, lest I disgrace my name, be any thing less than that, since you are king. I your subject ask upon my knee, that you will give me back the troth I plighted, and leave me to pass unnoticed and unhonoured to the tomb—I see that life is but a pilgrimage through a vale of thorns, and wish that I had passed it, and was at the doors of Eden."

Herod exclaimed as he embraced her;

"Hold my beloved Mariamne, I will cast my diadem away rather than restore you the faith you plighted—O be my guardian angel, guide me into the paths of piety, O teach me to depend on heaven, Mariamne be my wife, and I shall be able to pursue the right."

Her bosom heaved, and it was a struggle between her feelings and her reason, at length she replied with greater tenderness than she had ever addressed him;

"If I thought for a moment that I could lead you into the paths of truth, and retain the influence you tell me I possess—for the sake of

my people, for the hope of winning a misguided man to repentance, I almost think I could sacrifice my own feelings of repugnance, and share your love—But has not the gentle Doris influence? she is affectionate and pious—Go Herod, listen to her, and leave the wretched Mariamne to depart and dwell in obscurity."

He exclaimed; "Never no never will I yield you up—without you I am lost,—you are the means appointed by Providence to save me and your people like another Esther—I will be kind to Doris—but"—

"I will not marry you if you repudiate her; I will not be your wife while she has a claim to that high title."

Then withdrawing her hand she said;

"Blessings await you, I am your handmaid, and shall ever watch over your interests with unceasing care—farewell Herod, farewell, and may heaven bless and enlighten you."

She passed out and left him pondering on what had happened, until the voice of his brother recalled his attention to other, and even more pressing duties.

He found every thing prepared for marching at day-break for Jerusalem. His army was strengthened by new followers, and by the garrison of Massada.

Though the season was advanced, they all had hopes of taking the city before Antigonus could reach it with a recruited army.

Again Mariamne was left to feed the malice of Salome. This "Erinnys of her family" had endeavoured to learn from Reuben and Jonathan every minute circumstance which took place during the time the Princess was on her route and with the Essenes, but was unsuccessful in her attempts to obtain any information which could be construed into a tale against her. She ascertained the names of all the soldiers who accompanied her, and instigated minions to examine them separately. Her first wish was to try and crush both Mariamne and Babarrah at the same time, but the presence of Dermah and Tezellah rendered that wish abortive. One of her spies who carried on illicit intercourse with a soldier who was of the escort, acquainted her that the Princess had been often alone in the

company of Mazrah, and described him as a man, who if dressed as a warrior would have realized the accounts of Saul. This man had learnt from some of the brethren, that Mazrah had instructed Mariamne in the doctrines of the sect, and was often with her and Doris. Salome quickly perceived the value of this information, and shut herself up to revolve in the dark labyrinth of her mind, the surest method of converting it to her own nefarious purposes. She saw her brother raised to the highest state, she knew that he would be supported by the irresistible power of the Romans; it was evident to her that his accession would be rendered comparatively easy, and his reign more tranquil, if an Asmonean was his wife, and the High Priesthood was filled by another of the race; on the other hand she foresaw, that if such were the case, her own consequence would be diminished, and her determination to bring down the victim, whom she termed the proud Princess, would be frustrated. As her brother was now a king, she was bent on concentrating all the power and splendour in her own family, and at length coolly deliberated,

whether the Jews would become very turbulent if no Asmonean remained to share the throne or hold the High Priesthood.

She would have decided on cutting them off, if the love of her brother for Mariamne had not made her apprehensive that her life was dependant on the Princess safety; moreover, simple death was not enough to glut her dæmon-like revenge.

There was at Massada a Pharisee called Ananeel, who was the priest of the synagogue and the head of the provincial council. He was celebrated for his strict observance of all the tenets of his sect, and for his powers of dissimulation; it was said by those who knew him, that while he practised the traditionary laws he neglected to fulfil the common duties of his calling as a priest, or a member of society. Salome believed that she had found in this man a tool with which she could work, more particularly as Herod had been in earlier days obliged to him and was not averse to him.

Her first step was to obtain an apparently accidental interview with him; after the usual

eastern salutation and response, she continued ;

" Ananeel, you who are so distinguished a member of your sect, must have felt with all of us just indignation at the horrid barbarity of Antigonus in rendering the good Hyrcanus incapable of continuing High Priest : when my brother has expelled the usurper it will be difficult to find one fit to maintain with becoming dignity the high and solemn character—Aristobulus is yet a boy—who else is there ?"

" I have been long absent from the holy city, in my last journey to keep the passover I was plundered and beaten by Hezekiah, but without doubt the Lord's anointed will soon discover some learned Rabbi. Alas, it should not be a beardless boy."

" Our people, Ananeel, require a sterner and more efficient ruler than poor Hyrcanus—the Asmonean race has sadly waned of late—'tis even said that Mariamne is friendly to the vile, debased, inglorious Essenes."

Ananeel was well acquainted with Salome's character, and caught from that remark the tone

of feeling he thought his interest required him to profess. With well affected surprise tinctured with anger he replied;

"May my days be shortened, may my beard be plucked, may a Sadducee be my master, but I would bring the Princess before the Sanhedrin if only suspected of such inclination—an Asmonean become an Essene, the vilest of the spurious race of the accursed Sadducees?"

"Rabbi, thou knowest well the dread propensities entailed on woman by our mother Eve; who can tell what Mariamne saw and heard during her long sojourn among the base hypocrites?"

"Our Asmoneans were once noble minded, but since the death of the last of them, I mean the Princess father, they seem to have demeaned themselves—perhaps our king will teach them by his example to imitate what is great and generous."

"How should he teach them Ananeel? Why think you that they will be near him?"

The priest hesitated, then reluctantly said;

" You I must answer.—If I did not know from long experience that I could confide in you as in your anointed brother, it would have been more prudent to waive your question—it is thought that the king will raise the Asmonean to the throne."

" What is his love, which I have long suspected so apparent? do you really think so?"

" Your mother did not deny the probability, and I know that Doris, I should say the queen, is fearful of it."

" Now Ananeel can I trust you; will you swear never to betray an affectionate sister's fears? One too who wishes to see the wise and faithful Ananeel advanced."

" Not only am I to be trusted, but if I can serve the Lord's anointed, I know my duty—speak on, I pray you, and know that my life is ready to be laid down for my king, for as an angel of God so is my king—let me die so that the king and his throne be guiltless—thy wishes for my advancement are to my ears what the rose of Sharon is to my nostrils."

" I know my brother loves Mariamne: but

would the king and his throne be guiltless if he were to marry a woman who loved another more than she loved him?"

"Ah! it would bring scandal in Israel—tell it not, tell it not, lest our enemies rejoice—my lord the king must know of this, or I am not guiltless. Who is this she loves? It cannot be an Essene——"

"Ananeel didst thou ever see one Mazrah?"

"He was at the Palace gate this morning with grapes and figs, a Samson, a man whom the Samaritan women would entertain—a smooth tongued hypocrite—I know him—What was he at the harbouring place of that vile race where Doris was sought for and found."

"He was, and taught the Asmonean, and walked with her, and talked with her alone, dwelt in the same cottage, and I hear the Princess became melancholy before she quitted him."

The Rabbi cast his eyes to heaven and exclaimed;

"How hath the Lord covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud in his anger, and cast down from heaven unto the earth the beauty of Israel;

he hath polluted the kingdom of the princes thereof. I should deserve to die the death if I were not to tell my lord the king, and bring witnesses to purify the land."

" Let not thy zeal Ananeel carry thee beyond the bounds of prudence; listen—learn all thou canst of this Mazrah, and all that passed while this proud Asmonean was with him, and be assured the king will well reward thy zeal. Come to me when thou hast heard more: peace be with thee."

He made obeisance and replied—" Be with you peace," and was left to his own reflections.

The cunning Pharisee plainly perceived that Salome wished to rid herself of Mariamne; the hints of advancement and reward roused his mean and rapacious feelings, and without believing in the tale, he determined to discover what grounds there were for his informant's suspicions. He had never been a partisan of Hyrcanus, and was consequently not treated with marked distinction by his family, which rendered him far from unwilling to discover causes of complaint against them. The first enquiry he

made was at the Palace, where he learnt that Mazrah had brought some cool refreshing fruits from his sister to Doris, and that he had seen both her and Mariamne, and was yet at Massada. Being ignorant of the attachment borne by Tezellah to the Princess, he found an opportunity of accosting her, with the hope that she might be used as a means of gaining him information.

" Thou art a proselyte, yet maiden I have not seen thee of late in the synagogue, and thou hast not sought instruction of me; why art thou so remiss when I am so ready to teach thee the law, and expound unto thee the prophets?"

Tezellah knew the hypocrite, for he had tried to tempt one of her companions from the paths of virtue, and replied;

" In the valley of the land in which I was born there dwelt a priest of my people, who was downcast in his looks and strict in all the worship paid to the false gods of my fathers, but his heart was full of the love of gain, the honey of the poisonous bee was on his tongue, and lust

lurked within his eye. A damsel sought him in the Temple to be taught the worship of her God, he beguiled her into the gloomy labyrinths of his dwelling near at hand, and would then have defiled her but she resisted him and fled. This same wicked priest accosted her companion, to whom in bitterness of heart she had told of her wrong—what, Rabbi, should the maiden her companion do when this wicked priest offered to instruct her?"

The confounded Ananeel trembled, and was burning with anger, while Tezellah looked at him with triumphant contempt: at length he cast up his eyes and said;

"Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour. A false witness sheweth forth deceit. Our father Joseph was thus treacherously dealt with, and cast into prison, but the Lord delivered him and advanced him to honour; so is it with Ananeel."

Tezellah not in the least degree moved by his apparent sanctity, rejoined;

"Thou prophet art light and treacherous, thou hast polluted the sanctuary, thou hast

done violence to the law, I will not receive thy instruction, and since thou threatenest to appeal unto the king I will forthwith tell the queen of thy attempt on her handmaid, and thou shalt be condemned by the Sanhedrin."

Her dark eyes flashed with indignation, and all the fierce contempt of her Syrian blood was displayed to the astounded Ananeel as she spoke then walked away. He retreated, happy in not having opened his designs to this fiery girl. His courage was too much damped to prosecute his intentions on that day, but on the following he accidentally met the noble Mazrah on his way to the Palace with fruits and herbs for his patient. The Rabbi affecting condescending kindness addressed him;

"Thou dost well to honour those who are in authority, it diminisheth the heinousness of thy errors in forsaking the true law and pure traditions—I shall take account of thee for thus performing a duty."

Mazrah, without betraying the least emotion, or allowing the serenity of his countenance to be

disturbed by even a passing shadow of displeasure, calmly replied;

" Faithful are the wounds of a friend,
But deceitful are the kisses of an enemy.
Thou praisest the obedient with thy tongue,
But devisest in thy heart evil against the king,
Thou teachest that the virtuous are beloved of Jehovah,
And seekest accusation against them,
Repent or thou shalt wither in thy prosperity, as the glutted wolf in the blast of the desert."

He fixed his unmoving eye on the wondering Rabbi, then entered the Palace, and delivering his offering to Dermah said;

" A hungry serpent is about thy house,
And having watched thy goings out and thy returnings,
Having laid wait for thee in thy paths,
Will wound thee with his death-bearing poison."

Dermah looked anxiously at Mazrah and rejoined;

" Thou cedar of the desert that shadest with thy branches those whom the tempest pursues, and yet seekest no reward, beware lest the worm

be at thy root. The Parthian seeth as he passeth and no man observeth his eye, yet he marketh where the hind hides her young, and where the cockatrice hatcheth her eggs which are for poison for the arrows."

They parted, both conscious of the danger, both certain of their enemy.

Ananeel was perplexed ; he did not like either to communicate with Salome, or to warn her of the watchfulness of those against whom she plotted, since he saw the continuance of the scheme would probably tend to his own benefit, and he did not care who suffered so that he gained : therefore he resolved to wait for some days, and then closely watch them while preparing to go to Samaria, then partly rebuilt, and where Herod had provided a palace for their reception, and where they would not endure the same privations as at Massada.

Cypros, Herod's mother, was old, but retained her understanding in all its vigour. The gradual and calmly observed approach of death had led her to more deep reflection on the vicissitudes of life, and the thorough hollowness of all worldly

things than was usual. She could not subdue her feelings of joy at her son being advanced to the regal dignity, yet she dreaded his possessing unrestrained power, for she knew well the violence of all his passions, and was aware that, the profligacy and hypocrisy of the ministers of religion, and his having been among the various heathen nations, had produced in him both carelessness for its precepts, and doubt of its truth. The gentle disposition of Doris and her winning beauty were the inducements for selecting her for his wife at an early period of his life, with the hope that, her example and affection would go far towards softening the asperities of his character. She found, when too late, that her gentleness was too nearly allied to weakness to influence the vigorous intellect of her son. Cypros experience and knowledge of human character pointed out to her Mariamne as the only woman who was likely or capable of arresting the unreined course to which Herod had given up his feelings, excepting where some great object was to be attained, and she heard with great delight that he loved her, and had not been

rejected. It was clear to her that Doris would be an obstacle to their union; but being insensible to the refinement of feeling which would create repugnance in Mariamne, though the custom was common, she supposed that an Asmonean Princess would not tolerate even an inferior, still less one who must legally precede her, and who had a son who would claim his heirship. She had overheard the firm declaration of the Princess not to marry her son while he retained another wife, and never to permit him to repudiate Doris, and was left in doubt of the result, and equally so as to the course she should pursue to attain the consummation of her wishes. The disposition of Salome was not quite a secret to her, though, as a mother, she glossed over much, made excuses for many of her indefensible actions, and would not credit or did not hear of many of her other proceedings. It was clear to her that she had formed an irreconcileable hatred to Mariamne, and would, if left to herself, endeavour to prevent the alliance which she thought might subdue the untamed passions of her favourite child, and in his present state render his

accession and his government more acceptable to the Jews. Experience told her that it would be useless to endeavour to extinguish the hatred of Salome, she therefore determined to try what could be done with Doris, over whom she retained considerable influence.

When she informed Doris of what she had heard, the afflicted woman gave way to poignant grief, since all she dreaded was now made certain. At first she could only articulate indefinite expressions of grief, then she upbraided Mariamne, but suddenly stopping herself, blessed her and called her an angel of light who had saved her, been faithful to her word, and had been calumniated. She then said ;

" I cannot hate her, though Salome bids me look on her as an evil spirit sent to vex me, and which should be in some way got rid of—I would yield my rank, my precedence, all claim to authority and worldly respect if she will not take from me my Herod's love, and drive my son from his father's presence. Mother tell her so—nay not yet, something may happen to save me—does *she* love him ? I doubt it, yes mother

I doubt it—if so, why should she marry him ?"

Cypros had gained much, and as evening prayers were announced determined to dismiss the matter for that night.

On the following day she renewed the subject, and ascertained that Mazrah was the man for whom Doris thought Mariamne entertained more than common affection. Cypros interrogated her closely, and discovered that the Princess had been watched by her during the whole time of her residence among the Essenes, and that this opinion was the result of the observations on Mariamne's manner, and the effect produced on her by the presence or the absence of Mazrah. Doris, though unable to appreciate fully the Princess character, knew enough of it to hope, that she would never ally herself to Herod if her affections were much excited for Mazrah, and under that influence had requested him to bring her more fruit, and to come often to Massada that, the recollection of him might be more frequently recalled to the mind of the Princess.

Cypros pretended to smile at her suspicions, and after very seriously warning her to be silent on so momentous a subject, promised to communicate with her as soon as any thing of consequence transpired.

Old Cypros knew the heart of woman too well to discredit the account she had heard, but ruminated on it much, and thus communed with herself.

" Many waters cannot quench love,
Neither can the floods drown it—
It springeth up in the bosom,
And entwineth itself around the heart.
Who taught the dove to choose his mate?
Who planted love in the breast?
Even He who created the world and all therein.
As in water face answereth to face,
So doth the love of a man to the love of a woman.
This hath experience told me—
That by instinct the wild roe findeth the hind,
In like manner the heart knoweth its fellow in feeling,
And if free they will abide together,

And will cleave together until the hand of death doth grasp them."

She relapsed into thoughtfulness, then murmured to herself as she continued to weave the yarn ;

" I lived once among the Essenes, they were pure and good, and kept the law, and meditated on it by day and night, their words were few, but their thoughts were noble—they were all full of peace and hope, they strove not, nor sought after vanities.—As my pilgrimage draweth to an end, methinks I feel their gentleness of spirit, their kindness one to another, their charity to the forlorn, their contempt of riches and worldly honour, their clear knowledge and simple-heartedness, more what my spirit will love when it returns to God who gave it, and my body to the dust.—In Abraham's bosom, in the garden of Eden, only such thoughts will be useful—for there the spirits of the just neither sow nor reap, nor toil nor spin, there they war not for what they cannot use, nor are anxious for honours which are turned when they get them into sore burdens. There all is joyful—The Essenes were

over sad, but they were evil entreated, and longed for the far country to which we all are hastening."

She sighed, busied herself in arranging more yarn to spin, then went on;

"She is beautiful, and so is Mazrah. She is gentle, so is he. They both love purity and peace. Both truly think this life a pilgrimage, and are wise above their years. Far far wiser than I were—God hath given understanding to both, and they are young and tender-hearted—Then Doris thinketh not without a reason that she loves him."

The old woman awoke as from a dream, and apparently calling her mind to more vigorous action said;

"This must be looked to—She is an Asmonean, and therefore proud—if she sees no more of Mazrah, no harm may happen—It were better that they had never met."

On the following day she watched for Mazrah, and sent for him. She gazed on him intently for some time, then addressed him;

"May no misfortune ever await thee or thine."

He bowed to the earth and replied ;

" May the sun of happiness light thee to the gates of Paradise."

She looked on him again and said ;

" The gadding and fruitful vine,
Twineth not round the tree of the desert,
It adorneth the palace of the king,
And is not planted to spring up and wither away,
And being cherished produceth its fruit in due season.
The lily of the garden, and the cedar of the forest grow not together."

Mazrah serenely answered ;

" Experience giveth eyes to the understanding;
The words of knowledge are in the mouths of the aged,
And are like honey to him who loveth instruction.
If the vine be planted nigh unto the cedar,
It will grow around it and adorn its branches.
Then only the axe to the root can tear it away,

But in cutting the vine the cedar will be wounded
and perish also—
Flowers of the garden and trees of the desert
should never be planted together."

He made obeisance and went away and returned no more.

The aged Cypros was pleased with her success, and wondered at the beauty of the man. His answer convinced her that Doris observation was correct. She little thought that while she was pursuing a course likely to prove beneficial to her son, she was also frustrating the schemes of Salome, and protecting Mariamne. The infinite intricacy of the effects produced by a single cause, prove that man can see but little into the ways of Providence; and must lead him to think that there is a web of universal laws to which every thought and action relates, and by which they are restrained or influenced, and to every one of these universal laws, is attached either reward or penalty.

Salome expressed her disappointment at Ananeel not learning more than he made known to her, which amounted to little beyond what has

been detailed. To forward his own ends, he heightened the accounts he had wormed from one of the men of the degree of intercourse which had taken place between Mazrah and the Princess, and was sent out to gain more intelligence. Before he left her, he hinted that the slave Tezellah was an obstacle in his way. This girl had been purchased when very young by Cypros, who was ignorant of the attachment she bore towards Mariamne. Salome immediately applied to her mother either to give or sell her the unfortunate girl. Cypros for a long time refused to part with her, at length by dint of entreaties and promises she obtained her as a gift. When Tezellah heard that she had been transferred, her grief was great, and she sought the protection of Mariamne and Dermah. The former offered any thing for her that Salome would ask, but her propositions were declined, and the disconsolate Tezellah was taken to the dwelling of the woman she most detested. Being aware of the intercourse existing between the Rabbi and her mistress, and suspecting that evil awaited her for her conduct to Ana-

neel, she determined on attempting to save herself by flight, and on the same evening left the fortress and sped her way to the glen where the Essenes dwelt.

Salome was desirous of having horsemen sent out to bring her back, but as preparations were making for the reception of the king, and for their departure to Samaria, her wishes were not diligently executed, so Tezellah escaped.

Herod having amply rewarded the Roman auxiliaries, and dispatched his brother Joseph into Idumæa, hastened to Massada for the purpose of conveying his family to the city of Samaria.

Mariamne who was now fully aware of the danger in which she was placed, formally, but privately applied to Herod for protection. She would not make any definite accusation, and principally dwelt on the report which had been sedulously spread of her having caused the death of Doris. Herod, whose love and admiration had increased as he become more intimately acquainted with the exalted character of Mariamne, was so exasperated, that without

farther enquiry he declared it treason for any one to speak evil of the Princess. Salome knew that it would be as impossible to stop the tide of his anger, as to restrain the force of the mountain torrent; and therefore retired to conceal her mortification.

The cunning Ananeel pursued a neutral course, waiting to see what would transpire.

They all reached Samaria in safety, under the guidance of the king and a great escort. The Rabbi, at the request of Salome, was ordered to accompany them, which he did with joy, since it appeared to him a prelude to his advancement.

Cypros privately urged Herod to marry Mariamne; and even went so far as to hint a possibility of her forming some other attachment. This suggestion, coming from his mother, whom he held in high respect, excited him again to press the Princess to accede to his wishes. Her forlorn and dangerous state, united to the entreaties of her mother and the advice of Cypros, rendered her less decided in her manner than before, although her repugnance was the same;

moreover, she could not, when she asked her heart, say that she loved Herod. His manliness, and the vigour of his conduct, added to the greatness of his designs, the generosity of his nature, and his evident enthusiastic love for her, compelled her to admire him for these qualities, to have no repugnance to feeling for him still greater attachment, and to hope that she might influence him so far as to curb and direct the sterner feelings of his soul; yet she could not conquer her hatred to sharing his love, and therefore refused to fulfil her promise.

While Herod was endeavouring to overcome her scruples, an incursion of many united tribes of wandering Arabs compelled him to hasten with his army to suppress their inroads.

It was some time before Herod quelled this confederacy of freebooters; for their numbers were so great, that at one time it was doubtful if they were not victorious over a wing of his army. Even after completely routing them, they re-assembled, and compelled him to relinquish his intention of returning to Samaria, and

resume his hostile operations against them. Although he shewed them no mercy, and nearly exterminated them, the remnants formed themselves again, and attacked his rear, when marching to join Antony who was besieging Samosata.

While Herod was thus employed, his sister was devising every means to prevent his alliance with Mariamne. Dermah had made known to the Princess the reason of her obtaining Tezellah, and at the same time warned her against Ananeel. Her fear of giving cause for remark, induced her to remain much alone, and made her ponder on the past, the present, and the future.

Salome was afraid of pursuing any open measures, and so resorted to stratagem. As soon as she heard of Antony's being at Samosata, she resolved to make his presence a means of annoying her victim, and of endeavouring to injure her in the esteem of Herod.

She wrote two letters similar in subject, but differing in expression, and purporting to have been sent by Antony to Mariamne. One of these she artfully contrived to have placed on the Princess pillow; the other she opened, un-

rolled, and threw in the passage through which Mariamne sometimes passed, and along which she knew Ananeel would soon go. This letter was written as if from the Triumvir to the Princess, in which he extolled her beauty, and indirectly proferred her a portion of his rank. Mariamne discovered the letter as she knelt to offer up her evening adorations, seeing from the superscription that it was intended for her, she opened it, and became greatly agitated on reading the contents. It was not until after some hours' sleep, that her thoughts were sufficiently calmed to think on the discovery, then she began to be doubtful of its genuineness. Yet she was too apprehensive to make known the circumstance. Ananeel, as Salome intended, found the other copy; and after having read it, placed it fervently in his bosom.

A small detachment, with some wounded men, had reached Samaria, from Samosata, on the morning of the day Mariamne found the letter, which gave a greater air of probability to Salome's conduct, and served to perplex and add fear to the agitation her victim endured. A

great mind, conscious of innocence, always pursues a decided and open course, excepting when it suspects that the source to which it applies for protection and justification, has been poisoned. Babarrah being at Samaria, she requested through Dermah his immediate attendance; and without communicating to him her reasons, requested him to send careful and faithful messengers to the king, with the letter she had written; at the same time desiring that their being dispatched might be reported to have been hastened on public affairs.

Ananeel, ignorant of the decided step Mariamne had taken, wrote to the king, and enclosed within the roll the letter he had found. The sycophant thus addressed his master;

"To the Lord's Anointed Herod King of Judæa.

"Ananeel, thy slave, prayeth for thy health and safety; and on his knees offers to thee homage and greeting.—The man to whom God hath given honour, is to be held in reverence of men.—Thy honour as a king, is a sacred jewel in the keeping of thy people; he who permitteth

thy honour to be assailed, should die the death. —Such is the duty of Israel. How much greater is my duty, when my benefactor and king is about to suffer dishonour. Know, mighty Herod, that I found the enclosed roll, which hath been evidently sent from Antony to the Asmonean Princess, and which without farther thought, and having made no communication, I send to thee, lest the king should be insulted, and his name made a pass-word among the people. The king knoweth my zeal and obedience. Peace be with the Lord's Anointed."

Herod, on reading this letter of Ananeel's, and the letter he had found, gave way to a torrent of confused surprise and rage.—While trembling with agitation, he seized on another letter which proved to be that of Mariamne:—he severed the string, tore away the wax, and thus read.

" To my lord the king Mariamne sends greeting, and her love and obedience. Be it known unto thee, that thy betrothed wife found, as she knelt to pray, the enclosed letter on her pillow, which, as in duty bound, she sends di-

rectly to her lord the king, since, whether it be a shameful tender from the Heathen ruler, or the work of some nearer and more malicious hand, the honour of the king and his oppressed Mariamne is attacked, and which must prove injurious to thine handmaid. I will not yield to anger and indignant scorn, but call on thee, O king, for protection. Thy servants are well, and present their homage."

Herod's rage was turned into grief and admiration mingled with threats of vengeance against the perpetrator of the act. He looked at the two letters, the one sent by Ananeel, the other by Mariamne, and was at once convinced that they were not the work of the Triumvir. This discovery perplexed him, for he had too high an estimation of his sister to suspect her: he thought that it might be a stratagem of Doris, or some enemy.

After revolving the matter in his mind he resolved to use it to hasten his marriage with Mariamne. He directed the couriers to be ready to depart the ensuing morning. In the interim Herod wrote to Mariamne highly praising her

conduct, but affirming his incapability of defending her against the power and machinations of Antony, and advising her to escape his snares by immediately marrying him. He promised her the sole possession of the rank of queen, and assured her that Doris wished to retire from so high a station and devote herself to the education of her child. He pretended great alarm at the discovery, and to believe it the work of Antony.

Mariamne was staggered by this letter, and tormented with doubt and sorrow, and felt incapable of acting for herself. She sought the counsel of Dermah and Babarrah. The latter ascertained privately that no soldier had been the bearer of the letters, and at once pronounced them forgeries. Her grief at this declaration was encreased, for it shook her confidence in Herod, and excited a suspicion that it was a stratagem of his devising to accelerate his union with her. Although she was dutiful in her conduct to Alexandra, as no maternal return was made by her, and as her estimation of things was widely different to her own, it was worse than

useless to consult her since it might have terminated in dissension. While living in this state of apprehension and perplexity an unlooked for circumstance occurred which added to her unhappiness and perplexity.

A Roman courier arrived at Samaria, and desired to be conducted to Babarrah, to whom he delivered a letter for Mariamne, which he immediately sent to her by Dermah before he opened the dispatch for himself. Mariamne opened the letter and read as follows:

"The Triumvir Antony sends greetings and many loves to his Mariamne. Why did the enchanting peerless Princess refuse to see her adorer when she yielded to his embraces in the villa near Straton's Tower? Why did she fly him and leave him all miserable and lonely on the sea girt shore? Had not the affairs of the empire called your Antony away to Rome, he would have followed you even through the Lybian Deserts to have again tasted of the delights of Straton's Tower, to have seen the face of his beauteous love. I give unto thee Daphne with all its bowers, and will, if thou pleasest, make

thee Queen of Cyprus. Antony sues thee to make known to him by his special messenger how and when he shall again taste of the sweets of that love which is mutual. Farewell, beloved and beauteous queen."

Mariamne read this letter several times but could only wonder at the contents, which to her were full of dread and mystery. The first step she took was to ascertain if the messenger actually came from Antony. Dermah with some trepidation assured her that he had received the letter from the Triumvir's hands. The Princess was too agitated to observe the unusual manner of her favourite, and immediately retired to the seclusion of her own apartment. Sometimes she walked about yielding to various apprehensions, at other times she wept and wrung her hands, at length she threw herself on her bed, and while confused thoughts succeeded each other with great rapidity, sunk into a gentle slumber.

The trepidation of Dermah arose from her husband's having hastened to tell her that Antony had written to him to devise some means

by which he might renew his intercourse with Mariamne, whom he supposed to have received him near Straton's Tower. Babarrah well knew the dispositions of Antony and Herod, and how little either were to be depended on; he was also aware that the Princess would fall a sacrifice as well as Herod if the Triumvir discovered the imposition that had been practised on him, before the proper means could be taken to pacify him.

When Mariamne awoke her mind was more composed and her spirits less agitated, and she was consequently more capable of thinking on the contents of the mysterious letter she had received. All her doubts of Herod's sincerity were removed, and she felt satisfied that the letter she found on her pillow and that brought by the courier were derived from the same source.

The declarations of Antony were what puzzled her the most. The recollection flashed across her mind of Salome's conduct at Massada, her frequent references to the sea shore, and her sudden attack when Dermah interposed. It was evident that those circumstances and the letter

of Antony were in some way connected, but she could think of no certain means of ascertaining the truth. She could not, as a woman, shew the letter to Babarrah, she was even unwilling to make known the circumstance to Dermah, she could not depend either on the judgment or affection of her mother, and had not sufficient confidence in Cypros. Hyrcanus had been carried into Parthia as a prisoner, and her brother was at Antioch. The nature of the Triumvir's letter had rendered her almost incapable of using her judgment; in this state she remained until the evening, when she sought for assistance from on High, and resigned herself to the guardianship of Providence.

The courier applied either for letters or permission to return lest the Triumvir should accuse him of neglect. Being compelled to act, she rolled up a letter without a mark on it, and addressed it to Antony, at the same time she wrote again to Herod, and enclosed the letter the Triumvir had sent her. She privately summoned Reuben and Jonathan, and bade them ride with speed to Samosata and give her letter to the king, and to

leave the city without obtaining permission, since she would not only guarantee them safety, but reward. The brethren left the city immediately and sped their way to Herod, while the Triumvir's courier returned with a blank letter.

Mariamne, being conscious of innocence and having acted thus openly, felt more at ease, and gradually wrought up her mind to meet whatever should occur, with firmness.

Salome whose spies brought to her all the intelligence of every kind that they could obtain, soon informed her of the arrival of the Roman courier, and soon after that Reuben and Jonathan had disappeared. Her curiosity was stimulated to an unusual height, and she busied herself in fruitless attempts to discover what was going on. Ananeel on hearing of the sudden departure of the brothers, immediately informed Salome that he had seen them come from the hall adjoining the Princess private garden. This circumstance only increased her curiosity, and made her more desirous of penetrating into the meaning of these communications.

It was in vain she questioned Babarrah, she

dared not attempt to sift the quick and courageous Dermah, her tool Ananeel could not aid her.

Thus frustrated and chagrined, she wrote to her brother declaring her suspicion of a correspondence being carried on between Antony and Babarrah of which Mariamne was the willing object, and that her selected warriors Reuben and Jonathan had suddenly decamped from Samaria. The day after she had dispatched this letter to Herod, the brothers returned, and among other epistles brought one for Salome from Herod. This plunged her into a still deeper sea of doubt, and she fiercely examined them, but could only obtain the following answer;

"Your servants are ordered by the king to reply to any interrogations that we have been employed in his service."

She then resolved on pursuing a different course, and spoke openly of the affair, threw out hints, suggested many reasons, and so endeavoured to obtain information through the weakness of others whom she thought might be induced to speak when she set them the example;

but this was in vain, for Mariamne kept her own secret, and even led Dermah to wonder sometimes what had really transpired. Herod's reply brought by Reuben and his brother was filled with encomiums and expressions of ardent love mingled with alarm and pressing intreaties for their mutual safety to consent to become his wife, but no explanation of the mystery. She was pleased at having warded off any suspicion that might have been attached to her by the decided step she took in sending the Triumvir's letter to him, and was satisfied that she had acted prudently in keeping the secret to herself.

She observed that Babarrah and Dermah were watchful and restless, and wished to know the cause, but refrained from asking it, while she did every thing in her power to please and comfort the grateful Dermah.

Samosata having surrendered, Herod hastened to Samaria, and on his route learnt that Joseph had been slain in an incursion against Jericho. He lamented his death, since he had been faithful to him in prosperity and adversity, and was renowned for his courage.

On his arrival he went immediately to Salome to communicate to her the tidings of her husband's death. She rent her garments, shut herself up and bemoaned and fasted for seven days, during which time she would not allow any one to approach her, or offer to console her. If she could feel attachment for any one, it was supposed that she might have felt some for Joseph, though her conduct to him while living did not prove it. Cypros and all the others shewed her attention, and when the first days of her mourning were passed endeavoured to console her.

Mariamne attempted, but without success, to have the mystery explained to her. Herod pleaded ignorance, but expressed suspicions of its being a plot laid by Aulenus. She pressed him so closely on the subject, that he resolved to hasten his departure to Galilee where a rebellion had broken out. He was also bent on avenging his brother's death, and of using all the power, placed by Antony at his disposal, for the purpose of obtaining possession of Jerusalem. Before he left Samaria, he went to take leave of Salome, and promised to punish the destroyers of her

husband. She availed herself of the opportunity and the melancholy state which she affected, to try and work on her brother's feelings;

"Now thou art a king the eyes of all men are turned towards thee—what would the people say if thou wert dishonoured? Forgive, Herod forgive your loving sister for once more warning thee to know more of the Asmonean before thou art allied to her for ever."

He replied somewhat quickly;

"I know how truly Salome loves me, and how sincerely desirous she is of protecting my honour, but indeed there is no occasion for suspicion."

"Ah Herod, little do men know the depth of a deceitful woman's cunning. All that was said and thought about Antony, was, I believe, full of error: but have you heard of one Mazrah, a beautiful Essene, of the race of Judas Maccabeus wife? I am too much grieved to say more, but ask the pious faithful Ananeel, nay, ask your mother.—Farewell my much-loved brother, beware of an Asmonean."

She wept, and covered her face. Herod pon-

dered on her words, and immediately went to Cypros, his mother, to ascertain on what grounds Salome had founded her suspicions.

The old woman's knowledge of her son's disposition, made her quickly determined to turn aside the current of his thoughts; and she replied thus to his first interrogation;

"The young are full of suspicion; but it is the old who know how to form right judgments. Women, who have neither war nor commerce to employ them, are ever thinking that they or their companions are in love. A wise child rejoiceth the parents; but a foolish one putteth his parents to shame. What could Salome be dreaming of when she told you that Mariamne loved the Essene Mazrah?—An Asmonean Princess, proud, though prudent and wise above her years, to be in love with a wandering outcast. It is as probable as that the outcast should be fond of her."

Herod, almost smiling at the effect his sister's hint had produced on him, said;

"Have you ever seen this Mazrah?"

"Yes, my son, his sister nursed poor Doris;

and not long since he brought her a present of fruit. I saw him, he was a handsome and well-spoken man, dressed in rags, and one of the race which never marries.—You have been, I am certain, betrothed to Mariamne since you fled from Jerusalem:—remember, my son, that 'favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain,' follow thy mother's advice, and marry the damsel; she is the highest in thy kingdom, and in beauty and understanding is worthy to be thy queen. One more thing I would tell thee; Salome was ever prone to suspect, and very sudden in all her dislikes and friendships. The Asmonean, before thou wert king, might have been a little proud, which your sister would be loath to suffer.—I dare say it was so; and that her spirit was wounded, which is hard to bear.—Then women are by nature more implacable than men; and the young Princess has, perhaps, looked down on her. So, Herod, do not trust too much to Salome's reports, for she often sees things not like a prudent woman.—Get to Jerusalem, and marry Mariamne: Doris will not object, if you do not treat her harshly."

Herod replied ;

" I have ever found you wise, and will follow your advice.—I must now hasten to suppress the rebellion Antigonus has raised in Galilee, and is also attempting in Idumæa. May the blessings of heaven be with you."

He left her ; and after a few hours rest, proceeded with his army. The provinces were restored to a more tranquil state ; Antigonus defeated, and Pappus slain in a great battle. Their rout was complete, and so fiercely did Herod follow the flying army that, he reached the mountains on the western side of the plain of Jericho before sunset of the day of the battle, and saw, between an opening on the distant Mount of Olives, the city of Jerusalem, which he then considered as his own. The summits of the mountain were covered with snow ; the cold was intense. The smoke from burning villages and olive grounds and woods lower down the mountain, had obscured the sky which was filled with volumes of rolling clouds. Thousands of scattered cavalry and broken legions were hurrying through the snow from the summit of the

mountain, pursued by a victorious army exulting in success, when the clouds burst, and poured down 'ice stones,' mingled with snow and sleet, while a rushing hurricane raged along the ground and compelled even the excited victors to fall on their faces, fly for shelter in caves and amid rocks, or avoid its chilling fury by hurrying to the valleys. The blue lightning fell among the mailed men, and left heaps of them smouldering in their melted armour. The pealing thunder terrified the horses, and the sharp icy hail urged them, furious and ungovernable, in every direction; some among the flying enemies, whom the tempest seemed to bear away to the city; others galloped headlong down the precipitous hills, either leaving their riders, or dragging them along, and were lost by floundering in the marshy ground, or in the swollen torrents; and some as if driven by despair leapt from crag to crag and sought the summits of the mountain. Herod, though reckless of the tempest, had been carried by his steed to an elevated spot. When the blasts and hail had flown before them, the sky behind was a clear and lurid red, and displayed him upon

his rearing charger, on the edge of a flattened rock, waving his gleaming sword, and calling with a loud and hollow cry to his captains to collect and rally their astounded men. Before him was a deep and narrow valley, along which the torrent was rushing, and tumbling in its waves the struggling bodies of men and horses.

Far on was the dreadful blast, mingled with hail and winged with lightning clouds, through which were, here and there, to be discerned the trembling towers of the holy city, which were threatened with destruction as the whirlwind went onwards to the great sea.

CHAPTER XI.

WHILE Herod was thus battling for his kingdom Mariamne was left at Samaria harassed with solicitude and doubt. It was evident to her that he had waived explaining the meaning of the Triumvir's letter; the more she thought of its contents the greater degree of alarm arose in her mind, although she was very doubtful of the precise meaning of those parts which related to Straton's Tower. Antony's letter inferred that she had met him there, owned her love for him and then left him. As she had never been at the place, and felt almost antipathy for him, she could not interpret the meaning; many confused thoughts came successively into her mind, and all of them terminated in encreased apprehension, and in a wish that Herod was nearer to afford protection if required.

Soon after the account of the death of Pappus and the defeat of Antigonus reached Samaria, Alexandra sought for the society of her daughter oftener than she had been accustomed, and one evening thus spoke to her;

" My beloved child, I have for some time with heaviness of heart observed your cheek grow paler and your spirits become more depressed. Herod is now the king of our people, we cannot conceal from ourselves the unwelcome truth that our race no longer rules over Judæa. Herod when a Tetrarch loved you, now he is a king and still continues to love you, it would not be just to keep him too long in suspense. If you are not our queen how will your brother obtain the High Priesthood? Remember that if he is the High Priest, you the queen, and your descendants the kings of the people, we may say that our glory has not passed away, and is not held by an Ascalonite, but by Asmoneans. On you depends the existence of our race, for which you would surely yield up some of your unnational prejudices; besides you will be a queen with all its power and splendour,

and with all the means of enriching your relations."

Mariamne listened to all her mother's suggestions, and though some of them were of consequence, she could not avoid perceiving that great stress was laid on the rank and splendour attendant on the station of a queen. The remarks which referred to her race were those that really interested her, and she replied;

"I am not so selfish as not to be prepared to submit to the order of events for the sake of our family, more especially of my own my only brother. Doris is still living, and must in her right be Herod's queen, I will never be accessary to her being repudiated, for I should act in defiance of the law, and deserve the punishment of the wicked—I care not for rank and splendour, were I to marry him it would be for the safety and benefit of my family."

"Remember," continued Alexandra, "that those who have once held the reins of power have many enemies, and that their fall will leave them without friends and without support in the day of adversity, and that those who depended on

them for protection, or were their adherents become the objects of persecution. If you remain determined not to become the wife of Herod while Doris holds that title, and will not consent to his repudiating her, you either tempt him to dispose of her, or in his rage to spurn you—with you will fall your brother, myself, and all our race, for he who reigns will not tolerate the existence of the deposed family. Antigonus will not outlive Herod's conquest of Jerusalem, and Hyrcanus is old, a prisoner among the Parthians, whose king for a piece of silver would number him with the dead. Think Mariamne of the perilous state in which you place our family, think of the power and stability you can confer on it, and of the wealth and comfort you can bestow on your widowed and disconsolate mother—I had forgotten to warn you of Salome, who is our mortal enemy, and wishes our race extinct that her own may reign without participating their power or glory."

Mariamne felt the force of what her mother had said, and after a short time replied;

"I am in a great strait, my soul is full of evil

forebodings, if my life would remove all your apprehensions I would gladly yield it up, but there are things dearer than life, and far more painful to give up; I could resign the former if I felt assured that I alone should suffer. Why do you suppose that Herod is in any degree inimical to our race? he has ever spoken to me of them as being the first persons whom he would serve; I know he went to Rome to ask for the restoration of the throne to Aristobulus, and was, without his previous knowledge, proposed by Antony to be elected king. I am miserable at the thought of the man who seeks me in marriage being capable of acting as you conjecture he would—mother, leave me a little time to reflect on what you have said—I may take a step which will lead me to a life of misery."

"Is not my experience enough to guide you? A girl of your age weighing and reflecting when a king seeks you in marriage, and the existence of your fallen race depends on your acquiescence. You have presumed long enough on my forbearance and your own beauty—know that my orders are that you prepare to become the wife of Herod."

Mariamne was silent, for she knew her mother's violence too well to excite it by opposing her. After a short time, during which she repeated her injunctions, Alexandra left her.

Mariamne had been sadly harassed by the malicious reports of Salome, the letters of Antony, the entreaties of the king, the dread she had of injuring Doris, and now her sorrow was encreased by her mother having made known the decided wish she had of seeing her allied to Herod. Although her nobility of spirit scorned any suspicion that could be cast on her, she could not endure the thought that she was looked on as favouring the advances of Antony. When she reflected on the true character of the man, on his unprincipled conduct to his wife, and remembered that he was either an Idolater or an Atheist, her soul seemed burning with fear and shame, and while her heart throbbed the hot tears would start into her eyes, and she seemed prepared to sacrifice her life or every feeling to escape the danger which threatened her from him. After a wakeful night she resolved on seeing Doris alone, and the follow-

ing day requested Dermah to express to her that wish.

They met. Mariamne embraced her, saying;

" Do I now press to my bosom one who has confidence in me, who now is assured that I have ever consulted her happiness and welfare, and have endured much rather than accede to the proposals which have been made to me from my lord the king?"

Doris replied;

" It is hard for a wife to love and trust the woman to whom her lord has given his heart, for he cannot love two equally well, and she who loves as I do will feel her heart ready to break at even the thought of his despising her for another—I have confidence in you, I cannot help feeling gratitude towards you, and feeling affection for you, who seem to have no guile, but then my love for you is blighted at the thought that, you will deprive me of my husband, and leave my child and myself a prey to misery."

" Doris, I am incapable of injuring you or your child. I am surrounded by enemies, full of fears, and would gladly be gathered unto my

fathers. I cannot endure the participation of a husband's love, though my countrywomen have for ages submitted to it, and though no prophet in his anger ever rebuked Israel with it as a sin; and what was not sin can never be made so; yet I revolt at the idea. What are we to do? Is my whole race to be sacrificed for your just right, or will you yield for them?"

Mariamne ceased, and felt surprised at having brought the question so near an issue; and waited, with anxiety, for her reply. Doris, after much agitation, said;

"Alas, alas, I know my lord's impetuous temper, and think there is truth in what you say.—How can I do evil to one who sought me and nursed me with the tenderest care? How can I bring down Herod's anger on her race? Yet how can I consent to disinherit my child, and without fault be repudiated? If there is any one with whom I could share his love, it would be with her who has been so just and kind,—I could almost forgive him for being enamoured of your beauty and your kindness of

heart. I know that he will, if possible, possess an Asmonean Princess."

She hesitated for a time; then said, with an anxious look fixed on Mariamne;

"If thou wilt swear thyself, and make Herod swear to protect my child, and not to give me up to scorn and misery, I will yield my claims of priority to you, and—and—consent to live as Herod's wife and thy friend."

She wept; Mariamne embraced her tenderly, for she fully felt the greatness of the sacrifice she had voluntarily made.—After a time, she answered;

"I solemnly swear, never to injure either you or your son; and come what may, the noble sacrifice that you have voluntarily made, shall never be forgotten by me. Do not confide in Salome's reports of me; but from this hour let the bonds of friendship unite us, and let us both act together for our mutual safety and happiness. We are surrounded by evil men, and it has pleased Providence that we should live in times of blood and tumult; so let us submit, and under his guidance strive to make circumstances

subservient to us, and let us not be made the victims of them."

They embraced mutually promising secresy and professing friendship.

This interview, though it solaced Mariamne, awoke in her many painful thoughts. She attended the worship of the synagogue, and endeavoured, by resigning herself to the will of God, to calm her troubled thoughts.

In the evening she sent for Dermah, to ask if any farther news had reached Samaria from the army, and if any tidings had reached her of Tezellah, about whom she was anxious, though she hardly doubted of her being among the Essenes. She had heard no intelligence of the army, nor any of Tezellah. Mariamne then, with unaccustomed seriousness, asked her to explain more fully all she knew of the supposition entertained by Salome of her having visited the tower of Straton, during the interval she was absent from Massada. Dermah, not expecting to be examined on the matter, was a little confused, then replied ;

" Princess, I do know why the belief was ex-

cited in her, and why you were said to have been there; but my duty to my husband and my king forbid my revealing it to you; believe the words of your most devoted servant and friend, the whole affair was undertaken for your safety and benefit, and to counteract the intentions of your enemies."

"Dermah, my surprise is not diminished, and my wish to unravel the mystery is increased by your confession.—I cannot request you to act contrary to the dictates of your conscience, and therefore must remain in suspense; yet I will do my utmost to discover the nature of an affair in which I have been said to be concerned."

"Princess, forgive my boldness, (I cannot forget that I am the wife of one who was a Prince among his people, though fallen to so low an estate,) be wise, and enquire no farther into a matter the knowledge of which cannot benefit you in a remote degree, and which may eventually prove a cause of unhappiness. The thing is past; forget that you ever heard it."

The Princess replied, with great seriousness;

"Those concerned in this mysterious transac-

tion, are too high and too powerful to call up their resentment. Antony, Herod, Babarrah, Aulenus and others, were concerned to deceive either Antony or me, or both. I suspect that something has been done connected with a recent event."

When Mariamne was left alone, she was unable for a time to sustain the grief and anxiety that preyed on her; and she gave way to tears and gloomy apprehensions of the fate of her family and herself. Whether Herod was victorious, or died on the field of battle; whether Antigonus still reigned in Jerusalem, or the Triumvir pursued her, danger still threatened her, and misery seemed to await her. She knew of no refuge to which to fly, of no friend who could or who would dare to defend her against the powerful enemies whom she thought were ready to assail her. It was clear to her own mind that she did not love Herod; for there was no congenial principle in his character. In this state of mind she threw herself on her pillow, and, amid a troubled sleep, dreamt.

First, there passed along a female figure, se-

renely beautiful, with looks "commercing with the skies," surrounded by a halo of silvery light; the form now and then waved her hand, as if to urge others to follow her. Without this halo of light, were tempest-clouds, and a gloomy atmosphere which the eye could not penetrate. As the form receded, the light grew more intense, until it became a speck like the refracted beam from a polished diamond. A chaos of confused thoughts ensued; then the unconscious state of deep sleep, which her troubled soul did not long enjoy, for she felt herself alone on a waste howling wilderness where she heard fearful noises, and dreaded lest there should arise about her hadean forms. Her attention was attracted by the desert before her being changed into two different visions. One was a smiling landscape of hills and valleys, decorated with villages, surrounded with fields of rice and corn fit to be gathered in, with vineyards and olive grounds and trees of every fruit. The sun had risen, and was glittering on the dew and glancing on the streams which meandered through the land: bands of husbandmen with their wives

and children came singing hymns of praise from the villages, and began to gather in their harvest; peace and tranquillity reigned over the region; the wild animals mingled with the people fearless of injury, and the birds did not hasten their flight when man approached them. While gazing on the scene, a noble thoughtful man appeared; as he turned, it bore the likeness of Mazrah; she wished to follow it, but a sea of monsters rolled before her, and she drew back: that vision passed away. While longing to recal it, sounds of clarions and the neighing of horses pealed on her hearing, and she saw in the other a proud array of men looking reckless and terrible, moving in masses over a country blasted by fire, with vineyards trampled under foot, villages in ruins, and the miserable inhabitants dead or flying. Then there appeared a beautiful city standing on hills begirt with mountains, and towering from one of the hills a temple;—she looked, and it was Jerusalem; she marked the palaces, and the waning fire from the tower of furnaces. The city of her fathers was dear to her, and she gazed until she wept. There

was a din and the shouting of captains and loud noises of distress, while the city was enveloped with gloom; a blazing light swept it away, and she saw with exultation new towers and palaces, and a more glittering temple on Mount Moriah. She hastened and entered Jerusalem;—the buildings were all beauteous, the workmen were toiling, but there was sorrow and fear on the faces of all she met; while she wondered the vision vanished. Tremblings and feelings of misery came over her, for she saw passing on a gory form in the shadowy habits of a priest, then another young and beautiful and pale; hovering round were crowds of sorrowing phantoms, then there came by a beauteous vision with dishevelled hair, that moved not though scoffed at by a fury; she tried to look at the features of these last, but they had passed onwards, and were followed by two young and radiant forms; the vision had vanished, and a dread and dark abyss was before her; she gazed into it, but knew not what she saw, but awoke screaming, "Herod, Herod,"—and sunk senseless.

Her cry awoke Dermah who slept in an adjoin-

ing apartment, and she hastened to her. It was some time before Mariamne recovered, when she appeared to have no recollection of any thing having occurred, and until some unmarked thought restored the associations in her mind, she did not know that she had dreamt. As soon as she remembered her dream, she knew the cause of her fainting, and smiling told it to her faithful attendant, and begged to be left to recover the exhaustion which had ensued. Dermah kindly desired to remain with her: before morning she slept and was refreshed, but did not leave her apartment during the day.

In the evening the aged Cypros came to see her, and after conversing on the defeat of Antigonus, and the storm which prevented Herod from taking Jerusalem, she continued;

"Their blood have they shed like water on every side of Jerusalem; and there was no man to bury them—It is a woeful thing when the people of a land, mingled with strangers and heathen, meet to battle. The country is burned and miserable distress await the poor, and the women and harmless children fall into the hands

of the savage men of war, and are abused and slain. Woe awaits him who brings the desolation of blood and famine on the country; and it may be said that he is in danger who does not light the incense of peace, and stay the plague of war—The Lord will pour out his fury on them for the blood they have shed on the land—O Mariamne, that the land was vexed no more, and that our people were no longer mown down with the sword, as the corn is with the sickle."

She paused, and looked for some reply, the Princess at length answered;

"It seems as if the spirit of evil filled the minds of men, and led them to glory in deeds of violence and blood; woman is made to suffer by their hands, when they should support and console her, as the curse is heavier on the race of Eve. If men were ruled by the law of God, which is the law of perfect reason, our land would not be polluted with war."

Cypros continued;

"If women could curb the angry spirits of men, and lead them into the paths of peace, it

would be a noble field for them to toil in: Would'st not thou be a labourer there?"

Mariamne instantly replied as if warmed by the subject;

"I would toil, I would sacrifice my life to such a noble purpose—Alas, why do women praise the warrior, and feel exultingly at the sight of the proud and helmed captains?"

Cypros placed her aged hand upon her arm, and raising her feeble voice said;

"Thou art a true and noble woman, and thinkest like a daughter of the Asmonean race. Thou art fit to be a crowned queen, thou art worthy to sway the counsels of kings—Our sons are slain and slaying one another, our daughters are childless and our mothers are widows, and our little ones have none to help them. Thou Mariamne canst stay the battle, canst save our sons, make glad our daughters, and give protectors to the widow and orphan."

Mariamne began to see the drift of her discourse, and anxious to discover if she were right asked with uncommon animation;

"How Cypros can I save my people, how can

I give joy to the desolate and oppressed? I have no power, I am not a prophetess, and if I were, the people would not hearken unto me."

The aged Cypros rose, and looking on her firmly said, as she extended her hand;

" Thy voice can stay the slaughter,
The fate of Israel depends on thee.
Daughter, listen unto my words
And give ear unto my thoughts.—
Factions divide the leaders of the people,
And war is waged between the kings.
Thou art the flower of the Asmonean race,
Thou art a princess of the beloved of the people,
They will leave their leaders and cleave unto thee,
The king whom thou choosest they will obey,
And thus thou wilt stay the slaughter
And save Israel from the hand of desolation."

She sat down almost exhausted with the effort she had made, but still kept her eyes fixed on Mariamne, who after a long silence replied;

" If I were convinced that I have the power of restoring peace unto my country, there is no

feeling I could not sacrifice—O that my death would purchase it."

Cypros thought it unwise to press the subject farther, and after blessing her, left her to reflection.

The Princess thoughts became of a deeper character. If the effects, predicted by Cypros, would be the consequence of her marriage with Herod, she felt it her duty, and was ready to yield up every feeling she had for the benefit of her country. She knew full well the savage spirit of her people, and doubted that any good would result from her immediate alliance.

She was betrothed, and now bitterly upbraided herself for the precipitate manner in which she had acted, and would not permit her youth and inexperience, or the circumstances in which she then was placed to plead her excuse. She knew her mother's wishes, she saw the danger in which her brother stood, and had Herod been with her at the moment, she would have yielded to his intreaties. On the following day though more composed, she was ill and did not leave her

apartment until the evening, when Ananeel desired to see her, and was admitted.

He addressed her;

"May peace be at thy doors, and may joy be thy companion."

She bowed and replied;

"May truth be thy companion, and justice thine handmaid."

The meddling priest continued;

"Princess, the reverence thy servant hath for thee, and the great love he bears thy race, leads him to come and in private communicate with thee, it hath been said,

"How beautiful are the feet of the joyful
messenger,
But slow is the tongue of him who telleth evil
tidings.

A friend will hasten over the mountains to tell what is joyful, and will with sorrow be faithful to tell what is painful, lest a snare should be laid for the soul."

The Princess somewhat agitated said;

"Rabbi keep me not in suspense; the dread of evil is often more painful than the reality; is

my brother fallen into the hands of the wicked? Is the good Hyrcanus come to an evil end? Is the poor slave Tezellah dead?"

The priest assuming a sanctified look replied;

"Princess, thy safety is the object of my coming. Men are jealous, and jealousy is a dreadful leprosy of the mind; it beginneth with one small spot, and soon the whole is diseased past the art of the skilful to heal—There hath been one wandering to and fro and asking for thee, he is downcast, and sigheth much, and beateth his bosom, and cries, 'She will not away, but followeth me, and haunteth my pillow by night: her voice like music on the winds cometh wherever I go'—I sought him thinking that a demon possessed him, and asked him the cause of his sorrow, he looked wildly at me and said: 'Ask the Princess of my people,' I enquired his name, and he stoutly replied, 'Thou knowest,' he was altered, but I knew it was Mazrah."

Mariamne gave a slight convulsive start, and paleness overspread her face. The cunning priest watched her with his peering eyes; she recovered in an instant and said;

" Rabbi, depend on it he brings tidings of Tezellah, his exclamations are concerning her, surely some evil hath befallen her—She was a faithful slave and one I loved, go, hasten, and learn if he has seen her, take him to Salome that she may know, and be sure to send me an account by Dermah."

Ananeel did not move, and she repeated;

" Why dost thou not hasten? I would not that evil should await her; the man may leave the city."

Ananeel was obliged to obey the urgent request of the Princess, and reluctantly left her with his purpose half accomplished, and instead of seeking Mazrah, who had never been at Samaria, he went to tell Salome, the plotter of the petty scheme, the effect it had produced. She did not think that she was pursuing a course which would end in a result diametrically opposite to that which she desired.

Mariamne summoned Dermah, and bade her ascertain through her husband, if Mazrah or any Essene, or any one answering to the description given her by Ananeel had been seen in Samaria.

After minute inquiries Babarrah assured her that no one had been seen but a person named Menahem a demoniac who had been expelled from the Essenes years before. This reply gave her more solicitude, than if the tale of Ananeel had been true. She saw that she was suspected of having shewn attachment to the Essene. She examined her heart, and could not disguise from herself sentiments that were at least those of warm admiration, tinctured with feelings of a tenderer character. She was shocked at the discovery, and bitterly mortified at its having been detected, or suspected. Her pride was not wounded at the apparent lowness of Mazrah, since it was well known that the noblest blood in Israel was to be found among the discarded Essenes; moreover she knew that Mazrah was a noble being. Her spirit was wounded at having permitted unhallowed feelings to steal into her heart, when she was a betrothed bride. From that hour her resolution was taken to consent to her union with Herod the first time he should seek it.

Let those who are skilled in all the secret

workings of the soul, who can unnerringly trace all the various influences and different motives which prompt our actions, say, whether, Mariamne was actuated in her decision by, her love and pride for her family; her affection for her brother; her belief that she might stay the tide of war by sacrificing her feelings: or whether a secret desire to continue the sceptre among the Asmonean race; a dread of being made the concubine of Antony; and a fear of being suspected of harbouring affection for another, (she being betrothed,) urged her to decide on marrying Herod; or if all these circumstances combined and operating on her, brought her to this decision from which she never swerved.

CHAPTER XII.

THE stillness of the night was suddenly broken by the sounding of a thousand clarions, and by the blazing of innumerable fires illuminating the vale of Samaria, and crowning with flames the summit of Mount Zalmon: Shamir on the one side, and Mount Ebal near Sechem vied in brilliancy, and cast broad and flickering gleams across the woody vale: the illumination spread from Enhaddah and Jezreel to the mountains of Gilboa; so thickly strewn were flaming piles, that the silvery moon-beams seemed to be driven from the earth and to have no place to rest on: songs of joy with loud music resounded from every city, and from every habitation, when the signal from Samaria announced that the king had gone to bring home his bride.

Herod, wearing a crown resplendent with jewels, a Sidonian Tunic woven with gold and pearls, a purple robe edged with precious stones, and with sandals of wrought gold, proceeded to the palace of his beloved Mariamne, followed, by a numerous train of virgins all arrayed in robes interwoven with silver, wearing flowing veils striped with gold and crimson, and sandals of silk edged with pearls : each carried a silver lamp, and sung as they went the nuptial song. After them came a train of friends each adorned with a splendid wedding garment, then bands of musicians playing on the harp, the lute, the tabret, and various other instruments, with whom the joyous crowd, covering the tops of their terraced houses, sung in harmony, and with unfeigned joy. These were followed by a car of ivory and gold, drawn by six milk white Arabian steeds of the most beauteous form, and the purest descent. As soon as the car reached the Palace, the gates were thrown open, and Mariamne descended the outer stairs with Herod. Loud and rapturous shouts from the assembled people proved their adoration of

the flower of the Asmonean race. She wore upon her head a crown of diamonds; on her forehead shone a ruby of inestimable price; and pearls of unusual magnitude were suspended from her ears.—As she waved her snowy arm in token of thanks, she displayed the pendant jewels and bracelets wrested by the heroes of her race from those who trampled upon Israel. They were known like ensigns to the people, who raised their acclamations while unbidden tears flowed from their eyes, and they called upon the spirits of those who had burst asunder the yokes of their fathers. At their names Mariamne's steps were involuntarily stayed, at that instant, the wind blew aside her flowing veil of flame colour, and shook the odour from her hair which hung down in curls and braids. The melancholy majesty of her look had been for a moment changed to one of unspeakable exultation at the feeling for her heroic race, but it faded, and a tear stole down her wan cheek which was tinged with the ruby rays from the gem in her frontlet. As she stepped into the car, her ample mantle of dazzling whiteness,

fastened with a girdle, somewhat opened, and though the tunic did not quite fit the form, her faultless figure was clearly discerned : the remainder of her dress was bound with jewels above the ancle, and her sandals were laced with bands of diamonds. Herod stood with her in the car, and they returned to his Palace amid the songs of his retinue, and the acclamations of the people.

Mariamne descended within the entrance, turned and thanked the people, then the virgins lifted her over the threshold, and conducted her to the Armon, where the banquet was prepared for them. Herod, his chiefs, and friends, assembled in another hall. Each received the usual congratulations, and Alexandra the sumptuous nuptial gift presented by the bridegroom ; it exceeded even her avaricious wishes. Twenty slaves carried ten salvers of massy silver, piled with unwrought bars of gold, with precious stones, wrought ivory, and apparel of embroidery and beautiful workmanship, besides curious articles brought far from the east.

None among the women were louder in their

praises and congratulations than Salome. Mariamne hoping, that her actual union would terminate her persecutions, received her embrace, and cast on her deadly enemy a look of love and hope that would have disarmed any foe but a vengeful woman.

The aged Cypros felt more joy than any other; she saw her favourite son allied to the only virgin of the Asmonean line, and looked forward to its greatly facilitating his obtaining Jerusalem, and firmly seating him on the throne; since many who fought for Antigonus, or remained neuter, would join the king who had one of their beloved race for his partner on the throne. Her joy became so great, that amid the revelry, she rose and said;

"Bring hither the players on the harp and lute, and let us sing a song of joy to the queen."

Mariamne who was reclining on a lofty couch rose and could not forbear smiling at the ardour of the aged woman, and would fain have dispensed with her intended compliment; but she called with her tremulous voice for the minstrels "to play a song of Miriam's," and

gave the words which the listening throng caught up.

" The sun maketh fruitful the land with his beams;
The valleys rejoice when he rises above the hills;
And sounds of gladness and peace are heard on the mountains.
The Princess of Israel shall shed a light among the people,
The lowly shall sing the song of joy now she reigneth among us;
And the mighty shall lay aside their strife and seek the way of peace,
Jerusalem shall rejoice and call aloud for her queen,
The land of Israel shall exult and bless the Princess of peace.
Shout with joy, for love and peace are coming to the land,
And justice and truth have appeared among the people,
We will plant our vines and our olives, and carry in our corn,

Our children shall flourish and our young men
be saved from the sword.
Bless the Princess of Israel, bless her that
bringeth peace to the land."

They all sung the song with joyous revelry, and Mariamne could not for a time but feel that her marriage might restore peace to her harassed and blood-stained land. Salome repeated the choral blessing, and, evidently with effort, mingled her voice with the others. Soon after the virgins took their lamps and hastened away, and the others followed, leaving Mariamne alone. Dermah came and conducted her pale and melancholy (a sacrifice for Israel's sake) to her nuptial chamber.

Dermah perceiving her deep melancholy endeavoured to console her as she assisted in unclasping the ornaments which she wore;

"Be not melancholy, my beloved queen, be assured that Herod loves you. We know not the means pursued by Providence to bring us unto happiness. Babarrah has been most sedulous and minute in his enquiries, and told me, that when you were married, peace

would be restored; for the people all adore you."

A tear fell from Mariamne's eye, while she replied;

"Ah my kind good Dermah, you forget that my marriage may effect the expulsion of an Asmonean from the throne—may terminate their dynasty. You forget, that while I yield myself to Herod for Israel's sake, that I am instrumental in withdrawing his affections from Doris, who loves him, alas, more than I do yet. —It is the only instance in which an Asmonean Princess shared a husband's love. I have poured out the thoughts of my heart to you. I may love him more than Doris, if——I hear my mother's steps—She is coming to give me her blessing."

Alexandra entered, and immediately exclaimed;

"What, your jewels not yet off.—Herod is a noble generous monarch; his gift to me was as great as Antony's would have been, had he demanded you in marriage. Were Cleopatra here, I could vie with her in splendour. Child, how

slow you are,—What is there to weep about? You are a queen, and will re-establish the throne of our family; you cannot surely desire more.—Dermah, do unlace her sandals, and let me relieve you of that tunic.—Now, my child, may many blessings await you."

She took Dermah by the arm and carried her away, leaving Mariamne to her own reflections.

Antony, after the capture of Samosata, had returned to Tarsus, where Cleopatra was to meet him. The galley which bore her up the Cydnus was adorned with the most laboured carving, and entirely covered with gold; the sails were of purple silk; the oars plated with silver, and moving in time to the music of the softest flutes: beneath a canopy of cloth of gold reclined the wanton Cleopatra, attired in loose flowing drapery, which exposed her form, and gave her some resemblance to the Paphian goddess: beautiful boys as Cupids fanned her, and girls as Nereids and Graces attended on her. Perfumes and incense wafted their scents along the banks of the river, and filled the air with fragrant odours.

As soon as it was known that she approached, the people from every quarter flocked to gaze upon the splendid pageant, and Antony was left in the court of justice, where he was presiding, with only his lictors and domestics. As soon as she landed, the Triumvir sent to invite her; she declined and summoned him. He came and was entertained with so much magnificence, that he wondered at her wealth. The cabin of her galley was inlaid with mother of pearl and silver lace-work: on each compartment were sculptured the various vessels of the Nile, adorned with jewels, performing every evolution; the water deities of Egypt with their different symbols, and views of numerous cities built on the banks of the sacred river. The bars of the lattices were formed of immense pieces of polished crystal. The table was of exquisite workmanship, and composed of ivory inwrought with gold and covered with one plate in imitation of an amethyst; (the Egyptian workmen, though celebrated for their skill in imitating every precious stone, had never excelled this specimen, either in size or lustre); their couches were of wrought

ivory, covered with silk that vied in changing hues with the bosom of the dove. Every utensil was of gold embellished with gems, excepting some of the cups, which were cut out of amethyst and crystal. The viands, fruits, and wines, were the most delicious that the earth could afford. When evening closed in, lamps of gold, studded with diamonds and other stones, burnt naptha, rendered odoriferous by Egyptian skill, while the jewels refracted the rays from their various coloured surfaces.

Antony became enamoured of the Egyptian Queen, who exerted all her wondrous powers of pleasing, to captivate the willing victim. The third time he came to banquet with her, there were few with them, who soon on different pretexts retired; before the last had left them, a messenger arrived with a letter from Herod; he delivered it, and went away, accompanied by the last loitering guest. He hastily untied the letter, and uttered an exclamation of vengeance. Cleopatra approaching him, gently said;

"What so disturbs you? let us leave this

place for one, where unobserved you may contemplate on this occurrence which has broken in upon our happiness."

She led him unresisting to her retiring cabin, which was like the shell of the Paper Nautilus. She seated herself near him and again asked;

"What is it that thus troubles you? if a battle has been lost, Antony can soon redeem the loss—if any friend has proved false, he may find one more true—even in poor Cleopatra."

"I have this instant heard of one Princess who has deceived me."

She feigned surprise and said;

"One who could deceive the earthly symbol of Hercules? I can scarce believe you Antony—Who is this perfidious fool? Let me see this fatal letter, which has so discomposed you."

She took it from his yielding hand, and having read it, placed it near him and archly said;

"So Herod has outwitted you, and carried off the beauteous Asmonean."

She looked at him, and seeing his lip curling and pourtraying the anger rising in his bosom continued;

" Why is Antony so jealous of this Ascalonite who has received from him a crown, and taken from him his love?"

The Triumvir found himself within her power, and though not pleased with her teasing jocularity, endeavoured to pass it off with more good humour than he felt.

" Methinks since I gave him a crown, he might have left me my love—now I will take away his crown, and leave him his love."

She fixed her speaking eyes on his and asked;

" Were you at Straton's Tower during your progress through Judæa?"

He started and replied;

" Where, where did you ask me if I had been?"

" At Straton's Tower Antony."

" And what if I had been there."

" Do not be angry with poor Cleopatra for asking you the question."

He gravely replied;

" You know more of my affairs than you should do—That treacherous villain Aulenus must have told you this, I will cut off his head and his master's too."

" Indeed I never heard of such a man as Aulenus—How long did you wander on the sea-girt shore, all lonely and disconsolate, after your love had left the tower?"

Antony was now both surprised and angry, and said with vehemence;

" By my head Cleopatra it is too bad to watch my steps thus and then to beard me."

She placed her hand in his and gazing on him tenderly continued;

" Sweet Antony be not angry—I will not tell any one of the love affair at Straton's Tower. Forget her now she is married, and find another who will be more true."

" You are all alike, even Cleopatra herself would forget her love—"

The queen caught up his words and continued;

" As the lady did to whom you gave your signet at Straton's Tower."

" Cleopatra," he exclaimed, " by Jupiter you shall not leave this place until you tell me from whom you learnt all this—I will cut off Herod's head and crown."

" Alas poor Herod—I learnt it from the woman to whom you said—"

" What ?" hastily demanded the astonished Triumvir.

" Who pulled your ear"—replied the queen archly smiling.

" By heavens I'll know—"

" To whom you said—"

Before she had finished her speech, Antony seized her hand and exclaimed;

" Here's the signet ring—"

" On the hand that pulled your ear," answered the queen with downcast eyes.

" No, I dream, you were not at Straton's Tower."

She bent her knee and with feigned humility said;

" Can Antony forgive my cunning? Love is most artful. You stole away my heart when you were in Syria with Gabinius. Herod was not guilty of imposing on you, I heard from a slave your intentions respecting Mariamne; and then I hated this Asmonean, and knowing how gladly she would try and captivate my Antony,

I planned the scheme of meeting him at Straton's Tower, and left my kingdom for my love in a dusky galley with a few attendants."

She held the hand of the astonished Antony, who could scarce believe what he heard, but she told him so many little incidents that had occurred, and which they alone could know, that he raised and embraced her, and became more enamoured, because he believed that she really loved him.

The next day he wrote and congratulated Herod, but privately warned him not to repeat the affair of Straton's Tower. His letter was accompanied with a jewel of value and an increase of territory.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE marriage of Mariamne did not immediately produce the effect anticipated. Herod on his reaching the neighbourhood of Jerusalem, found that great multitudes (for it was the Sabbatic year) had assembled in the city, and being wrought on by prophetic declarations of divine assistance, and promises of rewards, were determined to support Antigonus, and defend the city against Herod and his ally Sosius with the Roman power.

The siege had been vigorously prosecuted without any advantage on either side, when on the fortieth day an attack was made on the outer wall. Before sun-rise the towers, containing engines for hurling stones and darts, scaling ladders, bridges to cast on the walls and filled

with soldiers were wheeled towards the Northern ramparts.

The morning rays shone on the Temple, lighted up the lofty towers of the battlements, and glittered on the vine and olive covered hills beyond. As the sun rose above the heights, its level beams displayed the moving legions, the horse hastening to their stations, and the besieged within the city preparing to resist the attack.

The towers approached, stones and missile weapons were hurled from the engines, and flights of arrows winged against them: the battering rams were plied with vigour, though the engineers were repeatedly destroyed. At the moment when the wall was won, and Herod thought the city would be taken, three of the towers fell into the earth with a dreadful crash, for the foe had undermined them; bands of the enemy rushed into the mine and fired the disabled towers, while their countrymen on the walls kept up an unceasing discharge of arrows. Herod now advanced with a chosen band; and while the besieged were continuing their opera-

tions against the burning towers and those yet not overthrown, approached, under cover of the smoke, the wall where the battering ram had beaten a partial breach; and rushing on scaled the rampart; and being closely followed by his men, and those supported by another legion, made good his footing; and after a sanguinary conflict, was left in possession of the outer wall. The second wall was defended with equal valour, and won with greater difficulty. After a long siege of five months, during which the Jews mined beneath the enemy, and meeting with their counter mines, fought them with unflinching courage in these subterranean passages, Herod determined to try and win the city by a general assault. His hopes of success were raised as the besieged were weakened by famine and civil discord. The assault was made in the usual Roman manner; the whole line-wall, and every other accessible part, was attacked at once. Beams, stones, darts, javelins, barrels filled with burning oil and feathers, molten lead, and boiling grease, were hurled at and tumbled on the exasperated assailants in vain:—they gained

the upper city, fired the portico and outer buildings of the Temple, and dispersing, spread carnage and dismay on every side; they spared neither age nor sex, and ravaged every place where booty was to be obtained; and would even have plundered and polluted the very sanctuary, if Herod had not, by entreaties and force prevented them. He tried to stay the dreadful butchery of his subjects, but the soldiers flushed with conquest, and eager to revenge the gallant resistance they had met with, were not to be kept back. He threatened Sosius, and told him that he would leave him the king of a desert, if his men were not restrained; but it was not until he promised the avaricious General a great reward, and a sum to every man, that he called his legions from pillage and murder.

Antigonus came down from the citadel, threw himself at the feet of Sosius, and, with bitter lamentations, besought his mercy; the Roman ridiculed his cowardice, and ordered him to be chained and borne away to prison.

Herod performed his promise to Sosius, paid

the soldiers, and was left in possession of Jerusalem.

His first actions were similar to those committed by almost every monarch who has won a kingdom by conquest, or been restored by the courage and affections of others to a throne from which he had been expelled. The treasury was empty, and he had pecuniary obligations to fulfil. The precious metals belonging not only to the adherents of Antigonus but to others, were seized on, and carried to his palace or to the sanctuary. Forty of the chief leaders and members of the Sanhedrin, were put to death, their property confiscated, and even their coffins searched, lest they should have buried with them any of their worldly goods. Besides those who suffered death, all the known followers of Antigonus were deprived of their lands, and reduced to a state of indigence and impotence. Sameas who denounced him before the Sanhedrin, and Pollio who had expressed the same opinions, were the only men of eminence who escaped.

This cruel and rapacious conduct rendered

him odious in the eyes of the people, and made them mourn for Antigonus, and grieve that the Asmonean dynasty was destroyed by a stranger. When Herod ascertained that they still cherished a fond remembrance for the banished family, he was apprehensive that they might reject him and replace them. At first he hoped that his being allied to Mariamne, might appease them; but he was mistaken. This failure left him open to the silent but certain working of all the violent passions of his nature; and he had neither religion nor philosophy to check their progress, or restrain their violence, when his favourite objects were in danger. Duplicity was the only method by which his intentions were masked from common observation, while it permitted him to meditate and strike a surer blow. There are few so intensely wicked who do not stifle the whispers of conscience by false and sophistical reasoning and excuses, before they commit a crime or willing sin, since the thrilling calls of that internal monitor are too penetrating to be resisted without offering some reply. Herod, finding the affections of the people still fixed on

the Asmonean race, wished that it was extinct. This wish soon increased to a latent hope, that by some means, they would be swept away; when he thought of Antigonus, he remembered that he had endeavoured, by treachery, to cut him off, and had virtually murdered his brother Phasaelus. The recollection of Phasaelus death was followed by a train of ideas, which thus passed through his mind.

"I could forgive his attempt on my life, because he knew me to be his rival; but he slew my brother. He a Prince and High Priest, who knew that the law he taught peremptorily declares, 'Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed!' Who are to enforce the laws of God? Those to whom he hath given power. Am I not a King? one who was prophesied of by Menahem; my being a king, according as he said, proves that he was truly inspired by God:—Shall my first actions be in rebellion against his laws?—No; Antigonus hath shed my brother's blood, maimed his kinsman Hyrcanus, leagued with the declared enemies of Judæa, and would, if it were in his

power, hurl me from my throne. Since it would seem invidious of me to publicly condemn him, and might offend that treasure of my soul, Mariamne, I will prompt Antony to do it, rather than the laws of God and reason should be set at nought."

He considered deeply the means by which he should accomplish his purpose. On the following day he ordered a splendid escort to be in readiness to carry dispatches to Antony. Several horses were laden with silver and gold, and an officer of rank entrusted with the following epistle.

" Herod, King of Judæa, sends greeting to the Imperator Antony. He who receives benefits should be mindful from whom they come. With the assistance of Sosius I am established in my kingdom, and hearing that the supplies for carrying on the war have fallen short of thy expectations, I send an humble present to thee for the purpose of supplying the deficiencies, and to prevent thee from being straitened in thy operations. Sosius sent unto thee, in bonds, the rebel and murderer Antigonus; knowest thou that this

same man cut off the ears of his kinsman Hyrcanus, the High Priest of the Jews?—a character and office which Pompey venerated, and which thou hast ever upheld—he hath done even worse than this, for he treacherously caught Phasaelus, when obeying your orders, and slew him by pouring poison into his wounds. By the law of the Jews 'whoso sheddeth man's blood must die the death'—it would seem like revenge in me were I to require of him my brother's blood, but in thee it would be justice, since he slew Phasaelus when sent by thee to take charge of the affairs of Jerusalem. I entreat thee by thy ancient friendship, by thy well-known justice, and for the sake of example, not to keep this murderer to grace thy triumph, but to let him die by his own law. He set thee and thy power at nought, and accepted from the Parthians the crown of Judæa, and then resisted thy orders and thy armies—farewell."

Mariamne entered Jerusalem with great pomp. As she passed along many blessed her, others asked aloud how an Asmonean Princess could marry an Ascalonite; some among the crowd

wept and bade her be an Esther to her people: at this she smiled in acquiescence, and the multitude raised a cry of joy, exclaiming—"She shall be our queen, we want no Ascalonite for a king; why didst thou marry him?" A loud voice from the crowd exclaimed;

"The Princess married to save her people from war, and that we might till our land in peace, for she is a true Asmonean and sitteth on the throne of her fathers—bless the Queen of Israel, bless her all ye dwellers in Jerusalem."

She turned to whence the voice proceeded and perceived the noble Mazrah; a crimson blush suffused her cheeks. The people, ever ready to support the beloved race, caught the words and enthusiasm of the speaker, and joined in shouts and blessings.

Salome was in the train, and recognised the Essene.

Some days after her arrival Herod suddenly entered her apartment, apparently raging with anger and vociferating,

"They have scourged him like a thief, and cut off his head like a common malefactor—what

will crowned heads and royal blood next suffer? Curses on these Romans, they are more wanton in power than a fattened tiger with its prey."

Mariamne hastily approached him and enquired;

"What has happened, whom have they scourged and killed?"

"I scarce dare tell thee, thou wilt not bear it."

"Tell me, Herod, have the cruel Parthians slain the good Hyrcanus?"

He assumed the look of one in anger who told what had surprised him and excited his wrath; then vehemently exclaimed;

"The villain Antony scourged then publicly executed Antigonus."

Mariamne started and was unable to reply. He continued;

"I thought that I had bribed that grasping Sosius deep enough to have secured his life. His cruel conduct to the good Hyrcanus deserved punishment, but not the punishment of death."

Mariamne looked at Herod, and said with a subdued voice;

"My race and name are for ever dishonoured

and disgraced—O that I had perished ere I had lived to see my name a scorn—tell it not, for our enemies will rejoice—I shall feel shame when I appear before my people. He was cruel, and deserved to be no more thought of, but to be thus disgraced—O Herod it is more than I can bear—curses on the Heathen Antony."

She fell on his neck and wept aloud, and did not yet suspect that she was cherishing a monster in her bosom.

Herod endeavoured to console her, but grief, wounded pride, and anger, were exercising their mastery over her mind, and she suddenly retired from him a few paces and exclaimed;

"You too have added to the disgrace of my fallen race; why is not my brother, whose crown you wear, installed in the half of his rightful inheritance the High Priesthood? Why Herod have you raised an obscure, time-serving, ignorant hypocrite to fulfil that sacred office? Has the Roman unsolicited commanded you to reject my brother?"

Herod was both annoyed and surprised at her

spirited and unexpected appeal, but answered with feigned composure and concern;

"My beloved Mariamne do not permit your just indignation against the heathen ruler, to excite suspicions of my love for you and yours. How can I prove my love for you so well, as by my conduct to your race? Hyrcanus cannot fill the office, for by your law he is now unfitted; no other Asmonean remains excepting Aristobulus, and he is surely far too young to take upon himself so great and solemn duties: Ananeel was placed there only till your brother attained sufficient years to enter on his office."

Mariamne had watched him while he spoke and said;

"I did not suspect my husband, but I feared that some reason existed for the act: there is truth in what you say of my brother's age, but it is an unsafe precedent to make and deprive an High Priest of his office at pleasure."

Herod was too much struck with the poignancy of her remark, to prevent the irritation he felt from being perceived, and answered;

"It is well for me that I can look forward to

Aristobulus being our High Priest since our interests are the same, but to have so high an office, possessing such influence, without the limits of one's power, would be to have a rival in my kingdom—No; soon very soon shall Aristobulus be inaugurated, he is wise above his years, and an Asmonean."

When he had finished speaking he embraced her, and recapitulated all the benefits he had received from her race, and those crowned by her love. He left her soothed if not satisfied.

Months elapsed and yet Aristobulus was not installed. Mariamne, now a mother, sometimes gently urged him to fulfil his promise, and always received the same replies. She feared being more urgent, for the jealous disposition of her husband was now evident to her, and the exercise of unlimited power brought into action the baser qualities of his soul. Alexandra, with less prudence and penetration into character than her daughter, openly upbraided Herod with perfidy, claimed the pontifical dignity as the right of her son, and refused to listen to any excuse. He attempted to silence her clamours by promises and presents, but she mistrusted the one,

and unhesitatingly grasped all the bribes he offered her. Salome secretly urged him to persist in retaining Ananeel in his station, and as her advice accorded with his own selfish policy he endeavoured to compass it. Alexandra exasperated at his conduct, privately wrote to Cleopatra to solicit her interest with the Triumvir in favour of her son. Herod obtained information of her having addressed the subtle and avaricious Egyptian, and being aware both of her personal hatred to him, and her influence over the Triumvir, he reluctantly yielded, and consented to the abdication of Ananeel, and the assumption of the pontifical dignity by Aristobulus.

Herod was conscious that he had advanced to the place next in rank and power to himself, one who had a greater right to the throne, and who possessed abilities capable of maintaining his right, and the love and admiration of the people.

Mariamne when she saw her brother declared the High Priest, believed the reason which Herod had given to have been sincere, and by her affection and thanks shewed the joy that she felt at his exaltation.

The feast of tabernacles was at hand, and the

king could not prevent the young Aristobulus from performing at it the first functions of his office before the assembled nation.

Crowds from every quarter of the kingdom were entering Jerusalem bearing with them tents, and their beasts of burthen laden with branches of all sorts of evergreen trees. On the first day of the feast, the flat roofs of the houses in the city were surmounted either with tents or bowers of palm trees, olives, citrons, myrtles, willows, and cedars; every principal street, and the spacious court of the women near the Temple were adorned in a similar manner. The amphitheatre of hills around to the very summits was studded amid vineyards and gardens, with arbours and tents, and seemed from the multitudes assembled on them to have a living surface. At night as soon as the tower of furnaces was lighted, and which flamed during the feast with two-fold brightness, countless thousands of lights burst from amidst the tents and evergreens from the city, and from the surrounding hills, and a nation with one accord and with enthusiastic joy sung Hosanna, and prayed for the coming of their Redeemer, while thousands of echoes from the

opposing hills reverberated the sounds of clarions and innumerable instruments, while the atmosphere was impregnated with the odour of incense.

Aristobulus rose above the crowd in height, and possessed a majestic and graceful carriage; his raven hair was parted in front and hung waving on his neck, displaying a high and capacious forehead; his eyes were large, black, and beamed with gentleness yet expressed dignity, his full and glossy eyebrows seemed to indicate the latent capability of being roused to deeds requiring courage and decision; his nose was slightly aquiline and pourtrayed command, his mouth was small but strongly marked and beautifully chiselled, his jetty and youthful beard fell in short wavings from a well turned chin.

He performed the functions of his office with so much solemnity and grace that Jerusalem was filled with the sound of his praises. The jealousy of Herod had risen to so great a height that he could scarcely restrain the exposure of his feelings. Mariamne exulting in the effect produced by her brother on the people, urged Herod to encrease if possible the pomp of the

last day, when Aristobulus was to offer on the altar the libation from the pool of Siloam. The better to conceal his horrid feelings he joyfully acceded to her wish.

Before the evening sacrifice, the king, Mariamne, and all the royal household, preceded by bands of instruments and the priests, and followed by a multitude clothed in white, all carrying palm, myrtle, or citron branches in their hands, went to the pool of Siloam. They walked round it waving the branches and singing together the song of joy. A golden vessel was cast into the pool and drawn up full of the water and borne by priests to the altar.

As the procession advanced through the courts of the Palace and across the Millo to the Temple, the air rung with shouts and praises of the Asmonean priest. Herod's lip was seen to become pale and quiver, and his step more hurried, while Mariamne raised her eyes glistening with tears of thanks and joy. The courts of the Temple were thronged. Before they arrived at the entrance of the court of the women, the High Priest advanced before the rest, extended

his hands, bent his eyes to the earth, and from the top of the fifteen steps that separated the court from the space before the entrance, blessed the people. On entering the gate silence reigned around, and he sung aloud;

"Lift up your heads, O ye gates;
And be lift up, ye everlasting doors!
And the King of Glory shall enter."

In a moment a hundred clarions sounded, and the people within and without in full chorus repeated his words.

Silence reigned again, then the women appointed to keep the gates sung, while distant music sounded in accordance,

"Who is the King of Glory?"

The High Priest and instruments replied;

"Jehovah mighty and powerful,
Jehovah powerful in battle."

The second chorus of the women repeated his words.

Then the clarions sounded exultingly, and were replied to by thousands for miles around, and the High Priest and all the nation sung as they entered;

"Lift up your heads, O ye gates;

And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors!
And the King of Glory shall enter.
Who is this King of Glory?
Jehovah of hosts, He is the King of Glory."

Aristobulus advanced with majestic mien to the place of sacrifice; the Priests and people bearing palm, olive, citron, and myrtle branches, went round the altar seven times, performing the Great Hosanna, singing the twelfth prophecy of Isaiah, and with fervour the following passage;

" Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation."

Then he offered up a prayer. As he rose the golden rays of the setting sun burst forth and illumined the altar, the precious vessels, and shone on the superior part of his person; the gems of the Ephod gleamed so brightly, that the gold and purple embroidered straps could hardly be discerned. The golden crown surrounding the mitre of blue, and on which was written the Unutterable Name, was radiant with resplendent light. He reverently bowed his head and held towards heaven the offering of the water of Siloam—his lip trem-

bled and he appeared absorbed in devotion—breathless silence pervaded the vast assembly; their holy thoughts seemed interrupted by involuntary admiration of their Priest. After a short pause occupied by Aristobulus in a silent prayer, he poured the water on the sacrifice and sung again, accompanied by the people, the prophecy of Esaias, ending with "Cry out and shout thou inhabitant of Zion, for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee."

As Aristobulus left the Temple the acclamations of the people told their admiration and their love, and they praised aloud the Asmonean name. Fear and jealousy burned in the bosom of Herod.

Mariamne observed with surprise and grief, and some alarm, a change in her husband's manner which he vainly attempted to conceal. He was restless, consulted oftener with his ministers, and gave stricter orders respecting the discipline of his troops; he was often found by her wrapt in gloomy thought, and his administration of justice was more severe than before. He received her affectionate attempts to soothe or amuse him as if they gratified him, but there

was a restraint in his manner at times which deeply affected her.

A short period after the Feast of Tabernacles he sent for Babarrah, and when he had questioned him on the state of the army and the prevailing opinions of the people, gravely yet familiarly continued;

"Emir, I am a king and possess the love of the woman I adore, and yet am unhappy—I would that I could see somewhat into my destiny."

Babarrah watched with penetrating look the monarch's face as he paced the apartment, then replied;

"To see the distant shadow of unavoidable evil would harrow up the soul—to view the fleeting gleams of happiness followed by tempest clouds of misery, originating in them, would turn hope into despair, and torture the soul to madness—lest we could see—"

"What?" hastily and perturbedly enquired the king.

"That the strange mixture, like the seething crucible of a cunning chemist, would produce

some infallible medicament for our polluted souls."

An involuntary thrill passed over Herod's frame; he looked disturbed and continued to pace the room, then stopping said;

"Thou said'st unavoidable evil—do'st think Babarrah that evil and good are predestined?"

The Arab promptly replied;

"Sire those are subtle questions of which I know nothing—I feel free to follow evil, or embrace the good my conscience points out with unerring voice—whether Cyrus had the power of not redeeming the Jews from their Babylonian bondage I leave your Rabbis to decide."

Herod paused awhile, then continued;

"Troubled dreams attend my sleeping hours, and anxious thoughts like evil spirits goad my waking moments.—I would be rid of them."

Babarrah was too deeply versed in human nature, not to perceive that some dark thoughts were revolving in the monarch's mind, and even guessed their import. He rejoined;

"Were I so harassed, I would tear away the veil that cursed evil ever draws before truth, and

wipe off the cheating gloss with which interest and vanity ever try to deceive the eye of reason, as the mirage of the desert leads the natural eye to expect the pure and wholesome draught, but gives nothing but burning sand to increase the fever of the frame; then I would make untrammelled reason state the facts, and without external influence argue on them; and if I doubted the result, I would apply to that unerring monitor called conscience."

Herod placed his hand on Babarrah, and with a voice, the agitation of which he could not conceal, said;

"Thou art right; but to be perfect at such exercise, requires practice."

He stopped; the Arab remained silent; at length he continued;

"When I was a boy, one Menahem prophesied that I should be a King—he caught me, and made me hear him.—I never remembered his words till I wore a crown."

He still paced the room with unusual quickness, then again addressed the cool attentive Arab.

"Of late, as I said, dreams have haunted me —twice have I dreamt that I fled from Jerusalem in poverty, and without a friend, and that Judas Maccabeus threatened me from the ramparts."

He looked at Babarrah as if to scrutinize his thoughts, but he only saw attention and repose upon his brow. After a considerable pause, he added;

"I have learnt that Menahem still lives; though driven from his sect of the Essenes, and dwells in the cave of Engedi. Are you afraid to go with me alone to that prophet?"

Babarrah could scarce suppress a smile of contempt, as he replied;

"How can I fear to go where the king would lead me?—Why should I fear to go when my conscience tells me that I intend no evil?—Sire, when you command my services, I am ready to obey."

Herod then bade him prepare two fleet horses, and be in waiting on the following night to accompany him to Engedi.

Night had not cast her sable shadow over the

earth, when Herod left the Palace with Babarrah; both habited as horsemen conveying dispatches to some distant province. They passed through the horse-gate, traversed the royal gardens, and entered the vale of the brook of Cedron. The rising hills on their right gradually assumed a wild and more rocky character, until naked and towering crags cast a deep and solemn gloom across the narrow valley. After riding in darkness nearly an hour, the moon peeped above the rocks, and touched with softened light the tops of the vine clad steeps on the opposite side; as she rose, the steppes and cultivated slopes became illumined; at length the rippling water caught the golden gleam, and displayed one half of the vale in broad light, the other with its ridge of crags was left in clear deep shadow, save where some narrow openings gave access to the beams. The white walls and distant hum of men told them that the city on their left was Azmaveth, and that they must soon leave the course of Cedron. A sudden turn of the brook brought them near the pass of Ethan. Babarrah warned the monarch, and

they turned to the gorge of the defile. The first part of the ascent was steep and so narrow that the horses could hardly keep their feet. A sudden bend brought them into the full light of the moon then exactly opposite the entrance of the plain; the rocks on both sides towered above them, and here and there overhung the narrow pass. No sound was heard save the whispering wind among the light hanging foliage which sprung among the clefts, the quick breathing of the steeds, and their clanging tread. They hurried by the towers of Ethan, and galloped down the plain of Tekoah, until their coursers' sides, white with foam, glittered in the light.

When near the watch tower of Tekoah, Babarrah rode forward, reined up his panting horse, and whistled twice. Herod, though he loved his guide, involuntarily grasped his sword, which Babarrah seeing, smiled at with utter scorn. The sound of hastening horses was soon heard; and presently Reuben and Jonathan appeared with fresh coursers. Few words passed and they again pursued their rapid way, and gained by the pass the valley of Berachah, then

skirting the walls of Middin, swam the Jeruel, and soon saw the mountain of Engedi rising like a ragged tempest cloud on the horizon. After leaving the vineyards, they verged to the left, and came to the steep which leads to the cave.

Their panting horses toiled with slow steps up the rough ascent, at last they wound along a gloomy path, darkened with stunted oaks, which ended in a sudden turn and an extensive terrace. They dismounted, and even Herod stood for a time gazing on the scene before them. Beneath their feet were crags and precipices, gradually decreasing until spaces of green scattered over with fragments of rock were exposed to the light: herds and flocks were sleeping or feeding on the dewy pasturage; beyond were masses of wood, over which was seen, as far as the eye could reach, the Asphaltic lake, glittering with rippling streams of gold shed from the moon, or yet more brilliant planets: marble rocks rose behind them to the height of many hundred feet, whose white summits shone like snow clad peaks in the golden light. While

they stood gazing on this scene, a loud and distinct voice came from a dark abyss below them. The monarch trembled, and Babarrah saw his face become pallid, as these words were pronounced from the gulph.

" Hastest thou to shed the blood of the innocent?
Refrain thine hand from evil,
And turn to the paths of peace.
The winter torrent no man can stay,
The course of the wicked is not restrained,
Hold, or sorrow of heart shall begirt thee,
Consumption, the burning ague, and terror shall consume thee,
Thou shalt flee when no man pursueth,
Thou shalt sweep thy seed from the earth—
And thy name shall be a bye-word and a curse."

The words were repeated by many echoes each becoming more faint and solemn; the last word smote on the ear and mingled with the blast that swept across the great Dead sea.

Babarrah concealed by a fragment watched the countenance of the king, and there read alarm, superstitious terror, and the workings of

a soul perplexed with horrid thoughts. At length the monarch said in a hollow voice, which he in vain endeavoured to suppress;

"Babarrah—didst thou hear that strange voice coming from the deep?"

The unruffled Arab replied;

"Sire I did hear it."

Herod with some confusion asked;

"What were the words?—It must be some maniac, or perhaps one of the wretched outcasts of the Essenes imprecating curses—Curse was the last word it said, was it not?

The impurturbable Arab briefly answered;

"It was the last warning sound."

The king quickly turning to him repeated;

"Warning sound,—warning sound—what dos't thou think Babarrah it was an unearthly voice?"

Babarrah fixed his penetrating eyes upon the king's and firmly answered;

"Sire ask thyself the question, thy conscience can reply to it, more surely than I can."

Herod's eyes flashed and his hand clutched his sword. Though Babarrah saw the action he

neither moved nor changed countenance. Herod slightly laughed, it was a hollow half convulsive sound, as he said;

"My dreams, and these gloomy solitudes have conjured up a thousand phantoms—those strange sounds seemed to come from the dead; but let us go to the cave."

Babarrah led the horses within the entrance and fastened them on either side; then they proceeded into the cavern. They had not advanced far when the voice which had come from the gulph exclaimed;

"The king seeketh his destruction—a greater enemy is there than would have slain our father David; even a lying prophet, the follower of Shatan."

They turned towards the entrance, and saw against the light the figure of a man. Herod drew his weapon and rushed towards him, but the figure had vanished—they examined the terrace, and listened attentively but they did not hear even a sound. At length Herod proposed to return to the cave.

Even Babarrah entered the vast and gloomy

place with some apprehension; yet he led the way with a firm step. The cave rose to a height too great for the eye to reach, though the moon beams penetrated far into the recess—Shapeless masses of rocks jutted from the sides, and smaller recesses were faintly distinguished, soon the cavern became so wide, the light so diminished, that all around them was one dark abyss: Babarrah still pursued his path with unaltered pace, and soon they were emerged in the deepest night: their steps resounded in the lofty subterranean gulph and echoed so as to resemble the tread of an armed band. Suddenly Babarrah stopped and said;

"Sire we must be somewhere near the turning to the centre of the cave."

They stood as if doubting, when a slight flickering gleam crossed their path and died away.

"To the left," exclaimed the monarch.

Babarrah obeyed, and they saw far in the distance a fire on which fresh fuel had been thrown, soon the flame burnt brightly, and shewed volumes of smoke spiring upwards, but which was

lost in the darkness above—Bats, dor-hawks, and other birds wheeled and screamed as if fear-stricken by the flashing light. The projecting fragments of the rocks cast their misshapen shadows across their path. As they approached the fire, the noise of rushing waters reached them, and they perceived on their left an ever-flowing fountain which sparkled with ruddy light as it fell into a basin hollowed by its unceasing action, then flowed rapidly away—They had nearly reached the fire before they perceived leaning on a splintered fragment, a gaunt and sallow man, whose grizzled and matted locks fell on his ragged covering of wolf skin, his matted beard descended to his breast, his legs were bare, and seemed insensible to the heat from the flaming fire—As soon as he heard the tread he turned and peered at them with fierce and maniac look—he raised his staff above his head, and cried with a voice which a thousand echoes repeated accompanied by the screams of birds;

"Back, or may the curses of Hadean legions seize ye—Why come ye here to disturb my solitude?"

Herod pale, yet endeavouring to suppress his rising fear, said;

" Menahem I come to consult thee, and will reward thee."

" Back, away," screamed the man, " or in an instant I will involve ye in tenfold night, and whelm ye in an abyss from which even the night hawk could not rise—away, and disturb me not."

Herod advanced and said with more composure;

" I am he whom thou foretold'st should be a king—I will reward thee with all that can content thy soul, and will grant all thou askest if thou wilt but tell me—"

The man rejoined with a voice of scorn;

" Reward me with all that can content my soul—can'st thou monarch give me peace? can'st thou restore me to my sect, from which I have been driven for murder, the murder of my friend? Hast thou, with all thy legions, power to scare away the demons that haunt my path?"

Herod had advanced within a few paces of the wretched man; Babarrah stood at a little

distance within the shadow of a crag watching them.

The monarch with more composure rejoined;

"If I cannot cure the deep wounds of your soul, I may alleviate the pangs you feel."

"Never—never," cried the wretch, "they are the scorpion lashings of an harrowed conscience—what are your wishes? Why comest thou here with that Arab? I know him."

Herod in a firmer voice said;

"Menahem, tell me, shall I continue on the throne of Jerusalem?"

The miserable being muttered sarcastically;

"What would'st thou do to establish thyself?"

Babarrah saw the lip of Herod quiver, and his eye assume a savage and wondering expression. Again Menahem muttered;

"What would'st thou do to establish thyself without fear in thy kingdom?"

The king replied;

"Make myself beloved."

"Take care," replied his examiner, "thou art not feared."

Herod approached this mysterious man and said in a lower voice;

"Have I aught to fear from the Asmonean race?"

Menahem gazed on his pallid and enquiring face as he replied;

"Thou hast every thing to fear from them; they may be the means of driving thee from a heavenly kingdom."

"Will they from my earthly kingdom?" fiercely asked the trembling Herod.

"Thy headlong passions may"—replied the man.

Herod came yet nearer and half whispered;

"Will young Aristobulus?"

Menahem fixed his look yet more firmly on him and replied;

"There reigned in Israel a king who slew the priests that obeyed the Lord's anointed—he fell by the hands of the enemy, and his seed was cut off from among his people—so slay ye not the priests who obey the law."

A loud scream with cries of terror startled them—Menahem cried aloud;

" Take them from me—O Unutterable Name protect me!"

Herod stood rivetted to the spot trembling—the Arab was pale yet more collected than the others, and said;

" I know not if the spirits of the dead or the damned are here, but my conscience and my reason tell me, that some demon haunts your souls—monarch, I stay no longer, nor should'st thou."

Herod unresisting followed Babarrah, and they soon saw the glittering moon beams on the Asphaltic lake, and loosened their impatient steeds.

They turned their steps towards Jerusalem; on reaching the more open country Babarrah briefly remarked, that as the night was far spent it would be necessary to hasten forward, if the city was to be entered by break of day. Their horses reins were slackened, and as the high-spirited animals encreased their speed each of the riders pursued a different train of thought. Herod was perplexed, and mortified almost to venting it by expressions of undirected passion, then undefined feelings of shame and compunction came

like irresistible blasts across his troubled soul; these were followed by surprise at the voice which issued from the gulph and at the screams when Aristobulus name was mentioned; he tried to account for them, and more than half suspected his companion of being the author; he rejected the suspicion by saying to himself "how could he when there are no grounds for such warnings—I only sought to know my destiny for the good of my kingdom; I fear the people, not Aristobulus—they might out of love for him and his race dethrone me." He looked no farther into the dark recesses of his own mind to find the lurking monster and drag him before the tribunal of conscience, but more calmly calculated what degree of danger he was exposed to by having laid himself open to the observation of Babarrah, and the mysterious being who evidently knew him by the expressions he had used when he spoke from the mouth of the cave. His thoughts and feelings were confused, and he would have gladly hazarded his life to recal the events of the night.

Babarrah had studied too deeply the complex

workings of the human mind not to be satisfied that ambition, fear, jealousy, and the love of power were exerting their united forces over the fierce and ill-directed mind of Herod; he had observed the effect of the popularity of the young High Priest on him, and felt awful forebodings of evil after the occurrences of the night. The voice from the gulph and the interruption in the cavern were to him enigmas; he was convinced that Herod had been watched, and that his steps had been tracked or his intentions foreknown, but by whom he could not even conjecture. He was too well acquainted with the monarch's character not to be certain, that unless some extraordinary influence was exerted over him, the uncontrouled and evil passions of his nature would work their victim up to deeds of blood. He knew not how to stop their career; it would be impossible to apply to Mariamne since she might suspect the extent and object of his apprehensions; Menahem he could not trust.

Revolving on the weaknesses of the monarch's mind he concluded, that after the more violent affections, suspicion, and superstition were pre-

dominant, he thought, that by acting on the latter, he might suspend the evil he saw impending, and determined to consult with Dermah; he did not conceal from himself the danger he incurred from the suspicious character of the king, and therefore determined to appear most confiding, yet to be more on his guard and more circumspect in his words.

But little conversation, and that on trivial subjects, passed between the riders when the morning began to dawn. They had hardly reached the palace gardens before the grey mists disappeared, and the gorgeous raiments of the sky made known that the sun would soon rise above the horizon.

Scarcely had the orb peeped above the hills, than its rays illumined the city, glanced on the green hills bespangled with dew, and roused the herds and their keepers. Herod did not reach the Palace unobserved; for his aged mother Cypros had missed him, and suspected that his absence was for no good purpose. When he entered his private apartment, the wakeful Mariamne was struck with his fatigued and

distracted look, and thus tenderly addressed him;

"What cares, what unlooked-for occurrences have compelled you to be away the whole night, and return thus harassed? Ah Herod, little do the envious know the cares of those who govern them.—Come and let me smooth your pillow, and chafe your temples, until sleep steals over you:—no step shall wake you."

Herod, whose love for her had not been diminished, was touched by her affection; and after expressing some concern for his abrupt return, charged the Parthian with threatening an incursion, to avoid which, he had rode to meet their leader in private. She was satisfied with the tale, and lest she should disturb him said but few words more. Nature reclaimed her right, and the exhausted king was soon buried in the deepest sleep.

The day had far advanced before he awoke, when he saw his beloved Mariamne bending over him, and watching with anxious look. He clasped her to his bosom, a tear moistened his eye, the events of the preceding night glanced

across his memory, and for a time the kinder feelings of his nature made him thrill and try to stifle the recollection of the unformed fell intent that haunted his troubled bosom.

He saw no one the whole day excepting Mariamne and his aged mother. She had watched him from his earliest years, and since his elevation to the throne, had increased her vigilance; for she felt a presentiment of some dreadful evil impending over him. He was sitting alone when she entered, and appeared absorbed in deep and gloomy reflection.—She approached him, and said, with faltering voice;

"My son,—my son, thou art now a king, and I a feeble old woman hastening to where the wicked cease from troubling, and where perchance I may overlook and influence your doings. Thou wilt hardly listen to thy old mother, who taught thee to lisp her name, and call upon thy Creator in the days of thy youth; but I fain would speak."

Herod had always loved and respected his mother, and affectionately taking her hand, answered;

" My being a king will not make me despise the words of my mother, which I have ever found fraught with truth.—What would'st thou say? What favour would'st thou require me to do?"

The aged woman replied, as a tear stole down her furrowed cheek;

" I would, my son, in whom my soul hath ever delighted, that thou should'st have patience and listen to my thoughts. I seek not my advantage, but thine.—I ask not for gifts, but would bestow the inestimable riches of peace on your soul. Wilt thou listen to thy mother?"

He assented, though his heart misgave him, and he felt surprise. Cypros looked on him with a parent's love, then said;

" My son, as righteousness tendeth to life, so he that pursueth evil pursueth it to his own destruction. Thou art clothed with power, and honour attendeth thy steps. Thou wert, from thy earliest years, ambitious, and loved even the praises of thy fellows: now thou hast power, be not like the wild steed—ungovernable by the reins of reason: now thou

hast honour, fear not if others share it with thee."

At these words, Herod looked on his mother, and for a moment felt inclined to cut short her admonitions, but he allowed her to proceed, and partly from curiosity and partly from his present tone of mind, listened with unusual attention.

"Fear not for thy power and throne; for he that worketh righteousness can never be moved. Be not troubled in spirit because the people delight in their young High Priest. Thou hast placed him there, and so some of the glory reflects on thee. Mariamne, that gentle and noble woman, hath given thee a son, who will be loved for the race he hath descended from; and if wisdom and righteousness are thy handmaids, will be loved because he is thy son. So again, I say, fear not Aristobulus, and thy throne will be stronger established, and peace will attend thy steps."

She stopped, and looked on him for a moment, to see if she might continue. He was silent, and evidently interested;

"Why wentest thou far away last night?—I

saw thee return all covered with dust, and thy steed with foam. It was told me that Menahem had been seen:—he is no prophet. Herod, remember that Saul was at Endor, and that Samuel rose by the will of Jehovah, not by the wizard's incantations, and foretold his direful end. I guess that thou wentest to Menahem. Trust in thy God, spurn not the words of thy old fond mother, and prosperity will tend on thee, and the people will rejoice, and thy enemies will fear thee, and thy house will love and support thee. Take the blessing of thy parent."

She then quitted him weeping, he remained revolving her words and his own thoughts, and after a time thus reasoned with himself, while the natural principles of his character were recovering some of their suspended power.

"The people were always fickle, and at one time received me with acclamations—He did not seek them, but was lauded for the grace of his person and the manner in which he officiated; he is gentle, pious, and though with intellectual vigour, not aspiring, he doats too on my Mariamne, and would not injure me lest in so doing

he should affect her—His father raised mine, and was the founder of my own fortunes, his sister is my wife—No, one so young, good, and wise, and to whose race I am so deeply indebted and am so closely bound can never intend me harm—Mariamne, on whom my soul rests, loves him, and would not that the slightest evil should befal him: how ill should I requite her love if evil should come to him from me. It is true that my kingdom is disturbed, that he is beloved, and that the people would if they dared place him where I am—This would lead to rebellion murder and civil war—But he is loyal and would not heed them—No my fears are all chimeras and I will dismiss them."

This was the tenor of Herod's thoughts after the kinder affections of his nature were roused from their fevered slumber. He appeared among his people, was cheerful, and saw that the improvement in his spirits gave joy to Mariamne. He honoured, with every mark of distinction, the young Aristobulus. The sunshine of happiness and prosperity seemed to be dispersing the gloom and tempest clouds which had over-

hung his kingdom. The gentle admonitions and example of Mariamne were beginning to strengthen the nobler feelings and qualities of his mind, to weaken those of a sterner nature, and to render clearer his powers of perception and reason. But these happy effects were soon destroyed by Salome.

Her jealousy of Mariamne's influence over the king increased her hatred, and re-excited her slumbering vengeance, and made her meditate on the best means of punishing the supposed insults which had been offered her. She sought and found an opportunity of destroying the work in which Mariamne delighted, and anticipated bringing farther towards perfection.

Herod was walking alone upon the terrace on the summit of the Palace, watching the sun sink behind the hills, and the shadows lengthen across the vale, when his sister joined him. At the moment a loud shout of acclamation rung through the air, and a crowd was seen near the Temple. She immediately remarked ;

" It is the young priest coming from the evening sacrifice, he seems fond of performing the

functions of his office; his popularity increases daily, and half the nation is devoted to him."

Again the acclamations pealed on their ears, and she added;

"Ah Herod, such joy as that should be heard only when monarchs are abroad among their people. Such popularity too often begets high thoughts, and that effect would not be pleasing in the present instance."

Herod became thoughtful; the perfidious woman continued;

"See, see how the crowd increases; they are spreading boughs and branches before him—Who is that in the balcony of the court?"

Herod looked and said with surprise;

"It is the queen and her attendants—And who is that on the white charger that does such obeisance to the High Priest?—It is Babarrah."

Salome watched his countenance clouding over, and gloomy thought gathering on his brow: she would have sacrificed a portion of existence to have known precisely the thoughts that were intruding into his mind, all that she could discover was, that his soul was not yet at rest, and

that the young High Priest was the cause of his disquietude, after some silence she said;

"It pleases me to see the joy that Aristobulus popularity produces on Mariamne. How light her step was, how glad her mien when she hastened to the wall of the terrace to see the crowd salute her brother; perhaps she measures his feelings by her own, for she seemed exulting in her very soul when she entered Jerusalem and was hailed as an Asmonean: indeed some malignant spirit loudly affirmed that she sacrificed herself for her country; but we know that she loves you now—"

Herod became more disquieted, but assumed an indifferent air and replied carelessly;

"What can be more gratifying than to see the highest officers of the state hailed with joy by the people, and my queen beloved by them too—It is sanctioning my choice of the former and my love of the latter."

Some nobles being announced with a deputation, he left the terrace for the audience hall.

Babarrah after his return from Engedi communicated to Dermah the thoughts that occu-

pied his mind while hastening homewards, and added;

"When ambition and jealousy are contending in a ruler's mind with the natural generosity of his disposition, unless the latter has some powerful supporters, it will be overwhelmed—Dermah, the queen's brother is in danger, Herod fears him, and will, unless prevented, cut him off. Were I his counsellor I should bid him retire from the capital, and so check the tide of popularity that is scenting him to destruction. I have seen too much to consider myself safe—we will try and preserve him, then ourselves."

Dermah was not agitated though alarmed at the danger in which her husband was placed; her dark expressive eyes beamed on him with affection for a moment, then assumed a character of calm and high determination; she revolved the matter in her mind for a short time, then said;

"I dread the man, for his better qualities are like meteors, bright, attractive, and catch the admiration of the crowd, but they have no abiding place, and when not appearing, with uncertain flashes, leave the space around in tenfold

darkness. In him the brighter qualities must be nourished in security and with success; jealousy and ambition will soon exhaust them, for while he feels jealous he cannot feel secure, and while ambition sways him, he will, if he possessed a world, long for more success—then what remains? A ruthless tyrant with all the demon passions of humanity smouldering or blazing in his bosom, and with such power that nothing but a dagger could extinguish them. I will warn Aristobulus of his danger—he can fly—where? There is no place so safe as Egypt; Cleopatra will not injure him, but keep him as a check on Herod. Poor Mariamne thy cup is crowned with misery—Babarrah we will stay until it were useless to try and stem the tyrant's anger."

They concerted the means, and watched the conduct of the king. Dermah being the chief attendant and the friend of Mariamne heard from her much of what transpired within the private recesses of the Palace, and listened to her expressions of joy at Herod's encreasing cheerfulness, and how it sprung from his subduing the sterner feelings, which she fondly

thought were caused by the temporary excitements of war, and the opposition by which he had been lately harassed. His mind continuing for some time in this happy state, led even Dermah to hope, though her husband dreaded the bursting of a more frightful tempest. He saw him come from the terrace to the audience hall, and heard him ask " If it were Babarrah who rode the white horse ;" he watched the workings of his soul, and learnt that Salome had been with him alone, observing the young High Priest's return from the evening sacrifice.

At night he related the whole occurrence to his wife, who agreed with him that not a day was to be lost in warning Alexandra of the danger of her son. Herod had for some time kept spies about her person, and a guard, nominally of honour, round her palace, and had privately prohibited her interfering in any way with the concerns of the government; these proceedings had highly incensed her, and made her eager to escape.

Babarrah, the day before he intended to warn Aristobulus had occasion to pass near the tombs

of the kings, and there beheld Menahem asleep within a recess. On his return to Jerusalem he disguised himself and went back, and observed him near the entrance on the left. While pursuing a circuitous path, to gain the opposite entrance unperceived, he saw two persons approaching the tombs, one of whom he knew from his gait to be Herod. The sun was setting, and he hoped to gain the tomb without being noticed, as the twilight was momentary; for he had no doubt that the superstitious Herod was coming to seek information from the half distracted Menahem. He gained access by the opposite entrance to that where the wretched man waited the approach of the king. On gaining the centre of the spacious square, he perceived through the narrow passage which communicated with an inner and smaller chamber a burning torch. It was too late to retreat, and he passed through this long and narrow gorge and concealed himself in a cell over the entrance of one of the complicated excavations which surrounded this abode of the dead. He heard no voice nor footstep, and saw only the

flickering torch casting an uncertain light on the sepulchres, and gleaming into the labyrinthine avenues around. So long did this death-like silence prevail that the temporary excitement subsided, and his mind was restored to its wonted calmness. At length the distant noise of footsteps were heard, and soon after Menahem entered the chamber followed by Herod and Salome. They glanced around as if they expected the forms of those long past away to rise and gaze on them. As Salome looked towards the part where Babarrah lay concealed, her beautiful features, large and fierce eyes, and pallid look, illumined by the torch light, gave to her face the character of a fallen malignant spirit.

After a short pause Menahem seized the torch, waved it round his head, then cast it flaming to the ground, and left them for a minute just perceptible by the light emitted from the sparks before they became involved in darkness.

Salome raised a cry of alarm when the torch was hurled on the ground, clasped the arm of Herod, and evinced great dread.

Menahem in a hollow voice exclaimed ;

"Listen, O King, to the words which I must utter,
And give ear unto the truths which must be told;
God speaketh once, yea twice to the children of men;
Yet man shutteth his understanding and perceiveth it not,
He hath opened my ears in a dream,
And sealed my understanding in a vision of the night.
Lo, in the days of thy youth I hid it not from thee,
But told unto thee that which hath come to pass,
How that thou should'st become a king over Israel.
Now, again thou seekest of me knowledge,
And askest to be told the things that are to come."

He was silent, yet no one spoke; and Babarrah for a time only heard the quick breathing of the listeners, Menahem continued;

"Trust in him who withdraweth man from his purpose,

And hideth with the veil of truth, pride from
his eyes.
King what wouldest thou?
Shall the spirit of David rise for thy instruction,
Or shall Samuel come to warn thee of evil?"

Herod, with a tremulous voice, replied;

"Prophet, I want not the spirits of the grave, but I would hear if the kingdom shall pass from me."

Menahem answered, in a louder and wilder voice;

"I see visions of glory tinged with blood;
I see seed time, and harvest, and heat, and cold;
I see the babes become men, and the youths
gathered unto their fathers.
Thy kingdom is established for years."

Menahem laughed wildly, then shrieked and muttered, for the excitement had harrowed up his troubled soul: after a time he cast himself on the ground, and cried out,

"Cut not off thy friend in thy wrath,
Destroy him not in thy jealous anger,
Or like me thou shalt howl and weep,
And no man shall support or pity thee."

Babarrah heard, as if Herod and Salome had clung closer to each other while these words were spoken. Herod, with effort and half articulate voice, asked;

"Prophet, honour and riches shall be thine. Tell me, and quiet my soul;—will Aristobulus wrest my kingdom from me?"

Menahem no longer understood him, but lay muttering and crying. Babarrah had, during the latter part of the scene, descended from his hiding place; and knowing the position in which Herod stood, and having marked a sure mode of instantly finding the narrow passage to the outer chamber, suddenly exclaimed, as he rushed past them;

"Thou shalt do no murder."

Shrieks of terror were all he heard, before the fresh air breathing on his face led him from the tombs into the pale moonlight. Before him was the great city indistinctly seen through the dewy atmosphere. The loftiest buildings receiving the softened beams, and casting broad and deep shadows behind them, in which were more clearly seen the lights of the busy people. The

distant mountains waned, to the eye, in mist. The only sounds, were the hum of the city, the bark of the watchful dog, the cry of some straggler from the herd, or the tinkling bell of some leader of a flock. Babarrah stopped for a moment to gain breath, and mark his path, then darted among the neighbouring vineyards, and regained the Palace.

He resumed his usual dress, then communicated what he had witnessed to Dermah, who listened with anxiety, but not with surprise. He was well informed of all that passed in the Palace, yet could not guess by whom the meeting of the king and Menahem had been arranged. His not being summoned to attend his master, was a circumstance proving to him, that he was right in concluding he knew and had seen too much. On expressing his ignorance of the affair to his wife, she immediately removed his doubts, by telling him, that Mazrah had passed her near the gate of the Temple, and said, "Ananeel has been to Engedi." They agreed on the following day to seek for Mazrah, and employ him to warn Aristobulus; and if they

did not find him, to pursue such measures as were best adapted to effect their purpose.

There dwelt with Alexandra, as an attendant of honour, a young and beautiful girl, of the noblest blood, who often sought the society of Dermah, and was loved by Mariamne. Zillah had attained that period of life when the women of her country are given in marriage. Her person and mien were majestic, all her features were feminine, yet fully formed, and blended in harmony with the dewy softness of her large dark eyes: affection and gentleness were those leading features in her character perceptible to any observer. Mariamne and Dermah had long discovered, that when the nobler feelings were touched, her softness was changed into enthusiasm, and her affection to a feeling approaching to devotion. Aristobulus had been brought up with her, and Dermah had long suspected, that in her the affection of childhood was assuming the character of love. The manners of Aristobulus towards her were not unnoticed, and induced her to believe that their feelings were reciprocal, and only required one spark to in-

flame. Dermah sought for her, and spoke of the estimation in which the people held the Asmonean race, and of the popularity of their new High Priest. At the mention of his name she blushed while she praised him. When she ceased, Dermah, with solemn voice and manner, said;

"I would risk my life to save him from impending danger, and so would Babarrah."

Zillah eagerly said, while her countenance as quickly assumed a look of intense anxiety;

"And so would I."

Dermah looked stedfastly at her, and emphatically asked her;

"If he were threatened with death, would you, with secresy, warn him of his danger?"

At these words, Zillah sprung from the cushioned carpet where she sat, and exclaimed;

"With death—Aristobulus life in peril!—Tell me how, or where, that I may raise the city,—that I may give the war cry—'To your tents, O Israel,' and like another Judith, seek and slay the treacherous monster."

It was now evident that her smothered love

had burst at one bound the barrier within which it had ranged, and that her enthusiastic nature was lighted up, and would require a steady hand and a mind well versed in human passion, to direct. Dermah approaching her, said, in a low yet firm and touching voice;

"Zillah you love him; unless my penetration is like the vision water of my native sands, his heart is your's."

The maiden trembled and could scarce keep her eyes from bending towards the ground, while the tear that would not be kept back first glistened on them then hung on the long lashes before it fell. The blush that suffused her subsided, and paleness overspread her face; her eye assumed a higher character, which Dermah instantly perceiving continued;

"Now I see your noble spirit rising and quelling every weakness, and becoming resolved for the protection of him you love. Be secret or we are all involved in one blast of destruction. Herod is jealous of him, fears him, is working up his soul to—murder him—start not, blench not, Zillah, but prepare to save him. The super-

stitious king has been in the cavern of Engedi to consult the distracted outcast Menahem; he and Salome have met him in the tombs—mine and my husband's life are in your hands, so be secret and beware of treachery."

The pallid Zillah had lost the look of fear, her hand no longer trembled, her tongue no longer faultered, her lips were closed, and her countenance bore the stamp of resolution tinged with a passing glance of horror, she replied;

"Dermah, I love him."

She remained holding her arm, but said no more.

Dermah's countenance was animated with joy at seeing such heroism in one so young, and answered;

"Men may require many motives to inspire them with devotion—a woman needs but one; that you have named, and if your soul replies to mine, it knows instinctively how to foil the sages of the world, how to curb every feeling save one, and how to govern every movement of that curse-proving instrument, the tongue.—He must to Egypt, and Alexandra with him—you shall

come to me, and join him; perhaps with us—but you, you must warn him when he pays his evening visit to his mother—she, for her own safety, will be cautious—Zillah farewell, pray, and be resolved, for remember you love one whom a jealous tyrant, that has usurped his throne, would—hear the word, for it will nerve you—murder."

She returned to Babarrah, who had seen Mazrah and dispatched him to hire a galley to await their coming off Askalon.

It was an hour after sunset before the High Priest reached the Palace of Alexandra, who, with Zillah, was reclining beneath a canopy on the upper terrace inhaling the cool evening breeze. When he accosted them he observed a slight blush cross the maiden's face accompanied with an anxious look, and some trepidation in her manner. She drew her hand across her brow, threw back her floating veil and raven tresses, and looked out from the edge of the canopy as if to catch the passing gale. This manner was so different from the gentleness and attention with which she was wont to receive

him, that his curiosity was excited, and he determined before he left them to know the cause of it. It is probable that his own feelings taught him to suspect the tenour of Zillah's, and led him without any expectation of their developement being caused by danger impending over him, to seek an explanation. Their habits of intimacy from the earliest period of life and his situation, removed that restraint which was usual in the common intercourse between the younger persons of the community.

Alexandra retired from the terrace followed by her attendants, excepting Zillah, who loitered within the spacious tent. Aristobulus observed it, and waited until the train had disappeared, then approached the spot where she was. He was about to take her hand, and ask with concern what so troubled her, when the maiden suddenly turned towards him, and with restrained agitation said;

"We have no time for greeting now; the play of youth is past—thou knowest, that when the people of all the cities hailed David and received him with joy and with instruments of

music, the king was jealous and said, ' What can he have more but the kingdom?' and David fled."

The anxiety of her look and the firmness of her voice were changed when she had spoken these words, and the fulness of her feelings were truly pourtrayed by the tender glance from her eyes moistened with the gushing tear, and the tremulousness of her unresisting hand, which the astonished enamoured Aristobulus took, as he sought to know more of the dreadful warning she had given him. She replied to his questions, after briefly telling him what Dermah had made known;

" Suffice, I am ready to do all that friendship and sisterly affection can accomplish, and never, until you are safe, shall the womanly timidity I have shewn this night be seen in me again."

She prepared to leave him but he gently detained her, and after a moment's hesitation said;

" Zillah, when we were children we loved as such, that love has encreased until it has filled my bosom, and swayed every thought; when the people hailed me, and those nearest and

dearest to me gazed on me with joy, I forgot them and sought for your approving look—what has now transpired proves to me that we have thought and felt alike for each other. If I had never loved you before your devoted conduct this night would have inspired it, and bound me to you for ever—Zillah I love you, and here offer, before our God, to be your husband—will you betroth yourself to me?"

For a moment she was silent; then raising her downcast eyes, replied, as she placed her hand in his;

"I will."

Again she paused, and seemed to be mastering the tide of feeling rushing through her bosom, before she added;

"Though that sacred tie will not increase my zeal to preserve you, or my resolution to meet even death if it would ensure you from danger for I loved you."

He pressed her to his throbbing heart, imprinted the first, the last, the only kiss of hallowed love upon her lips, plighted again his faith, and remained locked in her embrace. She

first recalled herself, and checked the overwhelming flood of love that had spread over every sense, and then was thrilling through every vein.

" Aristobulus, we must not spend these precious moments thus—You must be in safety—a galley is prepared for you at Askalon. It is proposed that you and Alexandra quit the city as two corpses in their narrow cells. When once without the wall, one fleet Arabian will take you to the coast. Go, my betrothed husband, consult with Alexandra, and if it pleases you, tell her what has transpired between us; but tell not from whom the information was derived."

She passed onward, and disappeared like the vanishing form of a dream, and could not be recalled. He paced the terrace for some time, calming the troubled sea of his thoughts, and endeavouring to direct their course with steadiness and skill amid the breakers and sunken rocks that threatened him with destruction.—These thoughts were often interrupted by a fervour of love that suffused his soul, glowed

in his blood, and which nothing but a sense of peril could have prevented absorbing his whole attention.

Alexandra had long been eager to escape from the specious imprisonment in which she was detained, and would have embraced any opportunity without so sufficient a cause. Sometime previous she had written to Cleopatra, requesting an asylum and protection, and received a flattering reply, therefore the proposed plan accorded with her wishes. During the evening she summoned, one by one, into her presence, those officers and domestics in whom she could confide; and the whole plan was arranged, and to be executed on the following night.

Her chief attendant falsely conjectured, that one Sabbion, (whom Herod suspected of being privy to the murder of his father, and who consequently hated him), was acquainted with the scheme, and spoke to him concerning it. The cunning Sabbion pretended to feel the greatest concern and zeal in the cause, and learnt all that was to be done. He well knew that Herod secretly sought to accuse him, and thought the

present a favourable opportunity of gaining his favour, or at least of appeasing his anger. While Herod sat transacting affairs of state in the council chamber, Sabbion did obeisance, approached the throne, and presented on his knee a scroll, with a look which the monarch understood. He read the account of the intended scheme, and replied;

"Sabbion, thou deservest no favour at my hands; but as thy petition seems just, I will enquire farther."

The traitor bent his head and kissed the pavement, then retired; and as he passed along, affected a look of chagrin and discontent.

When the evening drew near, Alexandra dressed herself in homely apparel, drew her veil close over her face, and taking a pitcher left her Palace for the house of a domestic near the suburbs, from whence the humble funeral procession was to proceed. She gained the place, and found Aristobulus there and ready to be placed in the coffin prepared for him. Though Alexandra was agitated, her desire to escape from Herod was so great, that she made but

little demur, and submitted to the usual rites. The funeral, from its appearing to be that of some unknown and indigent persons, proceeded without enquiry or molestation until it arrived at the sepulchre. The coffins were borne within, when the entrance was suddenly closed, and three armed officers appeared commanding them, in the name of the king, to deposit their burthens and depart. The domestics fled: one of the officers bade Alexandra return with her son to the Palace, before so shameful a report should be spread through the city. Pale and alarmed she obeyed. The following day they were summoned by the king to a private banquet.

When their arrival was anounced, the king and Mariamne received them in the royal chamber. Herod saluted them with the kiss of peace. Attendants brought them scented waters in vessels of gold, while others shed over them the sweetest odours. He then directed two chamberlains to approach, who received from his hand a frontlet jewel and a ring of diamonds, which were presented to the astonished guests. They were then conducted with ceremony to the

private banquetting room. Their near relationship permitted them to remain together. This lofty hall was hung from the middle of the walls downwards with velvet of the richest blue, round which was a deep border of embroidered gold. Above the hangings to the centre of the roof were carvings and devices, cut in cedar and ivory, adorned with fret-work and gold. The tesselated pavement was covered with a carpet of the finest texture. Round the sides of the room were narrow couches, and pillows of the same coloured velvet as that on the walls, ornamented with gold and needle-work. Near the centre of the hall was a low circular table, surrounded with short couches, on which the party reclined, and received from the hands of mute attendants the viands, fruits, wine, and water drawn from the deepest well, while unseen musicians touched the harp and lute to the softest sounds.

Mariamne though afflicted at the conduct of Alexandra and her brother, to whom she was more than ever attached, was secretly pleased with the proceedings of her husband, and be-

lieved that they would restore their confidence in his protection and intentions: she exerted herself during the repast to shew her affection for them, and to remove the restraint of manner under which they laboured, and the king following her example appeared anxious to do them honour.

After the banquet was finished and the attendants had retired, Herod, affecting deep concern and regret, addressed them.

"When it pleased the rulers of the world to make me, unasked, the king of this distracted country, the first, the chief desire, of my heart was to share my power and my wealth with you. My beloved queen Mariamne will tell you, that your happiness and comfort were my greatest care, for I had to repay you a deep debt of gratitude. Your illustrious race cherished my fathers, and under the Asmoneans we were advanced. If the ill advised conduct of Antigonus brought down the wrath of the too powerful Roman on him, the fault was not mine—I went to Rome to seek redress for you, and there was, I may say, forcibly inaugurated king. This holy

city stained with blood, filled with civil discord, and divided by religious schism, yielded and received me as the king; and when Mariamne became my queen the nation was restored to peace. I will not boast of my gratitude; but it will be owned, that when the fallen Antigonus pursued you, and would have given you, instead of money, to the Parthian, I saved you. Since I have had the power, every honour has been paid you, and the people have shewn their love for you and so given joy to my heart—Why then have you attempted to escape out of the kingdom? Can I add to the wealth or amusement of Alexandra? Who would fill the station and command the love and admiration of the people like Aristobulus? Why then have you with a menial band tried to leave me? Do you love the land of your fathers, do you love Jerusalem and her Temple? If so, how could you flee away, and perhaps revive the dying discord of the people?—I should as soon have thought that the Jordan would cease to flow, or dew to fall on Hebron, as that the Asmonean would desert his country. Mariamne and I have wept at this unkind deed,

but as we cannot long be angry with those we love, again tender you our confidence and true affection."

The voice of Herod was rendered tremulous when the latter words were uttered, and he rose, turned away and paced the upper part of the hall.

Mariamne embraced her mother and brother with tears, while she felt at that moment more love for Herod than ever after inhabited her bosom, for she thought that his words had flowed warm breathing from his heart. He approached the downcast pair, and with unusual tenderness embraced Alexandra calling her his mother; his manner to the High Priest was yet more impressive, and he termed him his brother, his friend, the sharer of his kingdom in whom his soul delighted, until the young man bowed his head and could scarce forbear weeping, though horrid doubts still lurked in his mind, and the words of his beloved Zillah seemed repeated by some guardian spirit.

After they had departed, Mariamne so touched the heart of Herod by her noble thanks and ardent love, that he felt his dreadful intention

shaken: one pious prayer might have stayed his hand and changed his destiny.

The first intimation Zillah received of the return of the fugitives, was hearing of their being summoned to banquet with the king. Although doubt and dread occupied her mind, the deceitful phantom hope would have veiled them with visions of happiness, and induced her to believe that Babarrah and Dermah were deceived, if the former had not been disturbed and still desirous of prosecuting the scheme.

The High Priest had gone to the Temple when Dermah entered the palace of Alexandra. She boldly proposed to her to repeat her attempt to escape, and offered to personate her until she was far away. Babarrah though watched by Ananeel, contrived to make the same proposal to Aristobulus. Some hesitation on the part of Alexandra was followed by a decision to postpone the attempt for a time.

On the following morning, as if to prove the truth of his friendly expressions, he was, with Mariamne, present at the early service of the Temple, and on leaving it, personally and warmly

required Aristobulus to go with him to Jericho, where he intended to be during the joyous season when the balm was gathered, and also to enjoy the luxury of bathing in the pools which a prophet had been delegated to make salubrious. As the king was ready to depart, he had only to prepare and obey him. It was his ardent wish to see his much loved Zillah before he left Jerusalem, but as that was impossible, he sought a brief interview with Mariamne. The queen received him with warm affection, assured him of her husband's sincerity and affection, and bade him cultivate his friendship: she did not once revert to his attempt to escape, but congratulated him on the increasing affection not only of Herod but of the people. When he smiling, told her of his love for Zillah, she again embraced him, and gaily affirmed, that she knew it before he did himself, and added;

"She is a noble scion of a noble race, with more of Asmonean blood within her veins than any other in Judæa—on your return from Jericho your nuptials shall be celebrated. From this hour Zillah shall remain with me—Go my be-

loved brother, become chained with the bonds of friendship to the king your brother, and remember that by so doing you will make Mariamne happy."

She again embraced him and they parted—he had left the room, again returned and again embraced her, as if a presentiment of evil prompted him to take a last and yet more affectionate farewell.

He joined the cavalcade: in a few minutes Herod returned from reviewing his guards, and they rode forward. As he passed the portico, Dermah and Zillah were perceived by him through the half closed lattice. The eyes of the latter met his anxious look, they were suffused with tears, and as she retired into the room he saw her strike her bosom. A moment afterwards the hand of Dermah gave liberty to a dove which appeared frightened at the array, and winged its way towards the sea. Aristobulus saw the act, comprehended the meaning, and felt an earnest wish to quit the party and pursue the route it pointed out to him to follow—but he had been decoyed too far into the snare to be able to re-

treat, and so with heavy heart he continued his course.

About the time of their leaving the city Babarrah received instructions to proceed to Samaria and report the state of the works to Herod on his return. This incident encreased his suspicions and left him not knowing how to act. Of the king's dark intentions he had no doubt, but when, where, or how he would effect his purpose he could not divine.

He had on that morning privately dispatched Reuben to find Mazrah and bid him return directly, but the distance was so great that he despaired of seeing him before the following day, when it would be necessary for him to be on his road to Samaria.

He consulted with Dermah on the utility of declaring their suspicions to Mariamne, but after much deliberation they admitted, that the facts on which they had built them were not sufficient to accuse the king to his wife. They for the first time discovered, that their knowledge of human nature and the character of Herod had, combined with his late proceedings, led them to

their conclusions. The gates were closed before they had decided on any line of conduct, or had consulted with Alexandra. They did not communicate to her the whole grounds of their suspicions, though they urged her to forward his immediate return, and boldly declared that his life was in jeopardy.

The dreadful terror that haunted Zillah was soon perceived by Mariamne, who, prompted by the kindest feelings, endeavoured to learn the real cause, and became herself infected with unformed indefinite apprehensions. The mind of Zillah seemed to require all her power to keep it from yielding to the violence of despair. Mariamne called on her by every endearing name, by every tender affection to be more explicit. At length the fervour of her feelings would endure no longer restraint and she exclaimed;

" Phantoms of horror cross me—he will return no more—where are the warriors to protect him? I will go and shield him."

She rushed towards the door exclaiming;

" To your tents O Israel—Babarrah—O that

my brother Gedor lived whom the cruel Nabatæans slew !"

In her eagerness she fell, and remained senseless on the pavement. The attendants of the queen, astonished at her cries, hastened from an adjoining room, and bore her senseless to a couch. Dermah, who came in at the same time, exclaimed ;

" Command me, gracious queen, to send forth fleet horsemen to bring back Aristobulus lest he should see his betrothed wife no more."

Mariamne though astonished had not lost her presence of mind, and replied with calmness ;

" Go, bid the governor of the city to open the gates, and tell Babarrah to hasten with a fleet and trusty band and bid my brother return without tarrying to ask why—I shall fast and mourn until mine eyes behold him here again."

Dermah required no farther order but hastened to obey it. In a few minutes Babarrah and his men were on the road to Jericho.

They had not rode more than half the distance before they met one running and uttering from time to time cries of grief. Babarrah recognised

through the gloom the figure of Mazrah, and called out;

"Why hastenest thou with cries of mourning?"

Mazrah rent his garments and exclaimed;

"The High Priest of Israel is slain,
The waters have flowed over his head,
He is cut off from among his people.
Fear and a snare is come upon us,
Desolation and destruction pursue us—
Wherefore are the wicked mighty in power?"

He cast himself on the ground, and threw dust on his head, and raised a cry of bitterness. The armed men lifted up their voices and wept, and cried aloud with grief. One shouted;

"His blood crieth from the ground—to your tents and we will punish the foul Ascalonite."

Babarrah's eye glanced on the man, but his faltering tongue refused to rebuke, and his hand half unsheathed his glittering blade; at the sight the men raised a frantic cry, and exclaimed;

"For Jericho and vengeance!"

Mazrah started from the ground, and extending his staff across their narrow path said;

" To God belongeth vengeance—
His feet swift to slay innocent blood shall slide
in due time—
The day of his calamity is at hand—
Punishment shall make haste to come upon
him."

The vehemence of his manner and his attitude stopped them: but they gathered round him and said;

" Tell us how the pride of Israel hath fallen, and tell us truly, lest we slay thee as David did the messenger who slew the Lord's anointed."

Mazrah heeded not their threat but replied;

" My life is in the hand of my Maker, I fear not what man can do unto me—I heard that the king had brought him and his mother back to Jerusalem, and greatly honoured them, and so sped to Jericho—The way was long, they were tired, and when the sun was setting the king Aristobulus and a company came to the pools—I lay among the balm trees, and heard the king persuade him to bathe—he went with several of the company into the water—the rest had walked among the gardens of balm—some pretended to

sport and play while the king looked on and smiled—They surrounded him, and seemed to sport with him—Then I saw the king, as it were, pull down with his hands, as a signal to those who were around the youth; some dived and caught him; others threw themselves on him; he shrieked and sank: I sprung with my staff past the king, and called as I leaped in among them to spare him, and slew one near him and maimed another, but one smote me with a stone, and I sunk down and was near unto death. When my life returned they were gone, but I heard loud lamentations, and saw much people gathered together around the king, who pretended grief, and beat himself, and cast dust upon his head."

They raised again a cry of grief and vengeance, and unless Babarrah had prevented them, would have gone on to Jericho, but at his instigation they returned with Mazrah to Jerusalem.

Descending, they saw the city spread far and wide before them, and heard no sounds save the watch words of the centinels, they saw no light

save the flame from the tower of furnaces, which cast a gleam over a great portion of the slumbering city, not a breath of wind stirred a leaf, and the stars were hidden by impenetrable darkness.

As the band approached the gate they raised the cry of grief; which brought the wakeful guard to the walls. No sooner had they passed the portals and told the dreadful tale, than lamentations were heard, the sleeping inhabitants were roused by the sound and came to the flat roofs of their dwellings to know what evil had befallen them. Mazrah ran through the streets proclaiming Aristobulus death. In a brief space the silence and darkness that had reigned were changed for the loud wailing of a people, and the quick moving of innumerable torches and lights, and the eager voices of enquirers, and the hurrying steps of alarmed and grieving crowds— The loud wailing and lamentations soon reached the royal abode, while jaded horsemen came hurrying in, all bearers of the sad intelligence, making their way through the enquiring multitudes to the Palace. The priests and many

thousands flocked to the Temple and there called upon their God in their trouble.

Mariamne and Zillah soon heard the dreadful fact for they had ran out on the lower terrace, and were quickly followed by numerous attendants bearing lights and hurrying to and fro. The people assembled beneath the terrace wall, and were for a time subdued to silence by the presence of the queen, who stood with torn garments and her hair unbound, with her eyes cast up to heaven like a marble monument of grief—Zillah, pale and frantic, with dishevelled hair leapt on the battlement of the terrace, and in a voice of despair cried aloud ;

" The beauty of Israel is slain—
The Prince and the anointed priest is whelmed
in the waters of darkness.
Ye daughters of Israel weep over him,
Ye betrothed maidens lament for him—
Gird yourselves and lament ye priests ;
Howl ye ministers of the altar ;
Come lie all night in sackcloth ye ministers of
my God ;
Blow the trumpet in Zion ;

Sound an alarm ;
The guilt of innocent blood is on the land ;
O Aris——"

Her pallid and quivering lip refused to sound the name, and with a wild and despairing shriek she fell among the attendants who with their lights had gathered round her—As she fell thousands of voices reiterated their loud laments, and the population now assembled either about the Palace, the Temple, or on the roofs of their houses repeated the dreadful wailing until the morning broke, when a great company, headed by the queen, dressed in sackcloth and bearing ashes on their heads, set out for Jericho.—Zillah was delirious and raving with despair, and from whom Dermah did not go.

As they approached the city, the lamentations came at intervals like the loud sighings of an approaching tempest, which they repeated. The people had assembled on their houses, and as the queen and the great concourse with her passed along lamenting, rent their garments and vented their clamorous grief. Enigmatic sayings, insinuations of the manner

in which he met his death, and here and there loud imprecations were mingled with their cries.

Alexandra, who had rode by Mariamne's side, appeared almost incapable of expressing her distress, but from time to time uttered a wild and piercing shriek and struck her bosom— When the insinuations and dark sayings reached her, she turned her fixed and open eyes, from which no tear had fallen, to whence the sounds proceeded, her pale face and look of fixed despair increased the outcries of the people.

At length they reached the house where the corpse was laid.

Alexandra and Mariamne went, with trembling steps, to the upper chamber. No mourners had yet assembled there, neither had the first rite been performed. The beautiful corpse of Aristobulus lay extended and partly covered with his purple robe, the wet folds clinging to his lifeless limbs. His flowing hair all soiled with sand fell partly on the pavement and partly on his bosom: his eyes were open, their lustre and expression changed for the dim glassy look and the fixed unmeaning stare of

death. The muscles of his face, not yet relaxed, seemed marked as if attempting to utter a bursting sob of hopelessness and agony. Near the body were two figures closely mantled, who, from time to time struck their breasts and groaned. — The one was Herod, the other Salome. Alexandra, at the sight of her murdered son, gazed for an instant, then, with a shriek of distracting grief, and a gushing flood of tears, threw herself by him, kissed the cold lips of her child, and tried, with uncertain murmurings, to press and cherish his body in her bosom. Mariamne, pallid and trembling, stood looking on the last inanimate and beloved scion of her race, as if only half believing, that death had bereaved her of her greatest hope and the object of her deepest affection. A solitary tear hung upon the lashes of her eye, then dropped unnoticed to the ground. She knelt by her mother's side. They raised their trembling hands. Mariamne checked her bursting grief, though large tears rushed fast from her eyes fixed on her brother's face; they placed their hands on his stiffening eyelids, and drew them

over the glazed orbs. The touch of death seemed to bring with it conviction, clothed in all its horrors; and she trembled, screamed, and fainted. Herod, who through the folds of his garment had witnessed the scene, thought that Mariamne was dead, and hastened to raise her; but the attendants who had followed her to the door, held her in their arms before he reached the spot, and quickly bore her from the place.

Alexandra, still on her knees, looked for an instant on the king, then springing up beat her bosom, tore her hair and garments, while she exclaimed, amid bursts of agony and tears;

"The voice of thy brother's blood—the voice of the blood of my only son crieth from the ground. Where is my beauteous child? Ah! here all soiled and wet; but the spirit is gone.—The flower of my hope is cut down, and I am left destitute. My son, my son, would God that I had died for thee."

She turned towards the entrance, and cried aloud;

"Haste ye for the elders: deliver the slayer of my child into the hands of the avenger of

blood, that he may die: haste, I command ye, for thine eye shall not pity him, thou shalt put away the guilt of innocent blood from the land. O my son, my son."

She threw herself uttering exhausted cries and sobs on his body, and was taken away.

The indefinite language of Alexandra greatly astonished Herod, who was affected at the grief of a mother over her only son, and perhaps the sight of the lifeless body might have revived for a time the fast fading feelings of nature; he gave way to expressions of grief, and cast dust upon him, and even wept.

Salome, with affected dejection, tried to console him, saying;

"O my brother, that this great evil should have happened to Israel, and thou present. What can make Alexandra cry for the avengers? Surely she knows, that while thou wert honouring him, it pleased the Creator to call him away."

They left the room together, for friends and priests came to wash and prepare the body; that completed, spices and aromatics were piled over

it, and the mourners with melancholy music seated themselves around.

Herod found Mariamne still senseless, and with all the appearance of death. The scorpion stings of conscience began to lash him, the suspicions of the people to alarm him, and the fear that he had destroyed Mariamne to wring his bosom. For a time he appeared absorbed by the stupor of grief; then convulsive sobs burst from his bosom, and he threw himself groaning at the feet of his beloved wife. He remained in this state until the following day; when a report was spread through the city, that Mariamne had died, and the king was at the point of death from grief, and fasting, and false accusation. The Palace was surrounded by the people, and consternation filled the place.

Ananeel, who had consulted with Salome, and who looked to be reinstated in the High Priesthood, sought the king, and having made obeisance, said;

"May the God of Israel pour the balm of comfort into the wounded soul of the king.—Be not stricken down with grief, and let not the

backsliding of the wicked consume thee. Jehovah will uphold and clear his anointed. Would my lord the king permit his servant to offer to him the words of consolation and advice?"

Herod replied;

"Good Ananeel, what wouldest thou with me? My soul is sore striken, and my friends have left me, and my enemies have raised a false witness against me."

Ananeel bowed to the ground, and answered;

"When our father David knew the child was dead, and that his kingdom required his presence, he arose from the earth, and washed and anointed himself, and changed his apparel, and came into the house of the Lord and worshipped: and afterwards he did eat bread and comforted himself. O king, thy servant beseeches thee to do as thy father David did."

No advice could have been more congenial to the monarch's wishes; who replied with a manner that convinced him Salome had not misjudged;

"Good Ananeel, thy consolation and advice are befitting a man of God and a friend. Lest

my silence and absence should be misconstrued, I will go to the place of worship, and appear among the people."

He arrayed himself and went. This act of worship made some more doubtful than they previously were, while it impressed others with a deeper conviction of his guilt.

At length the day of the burial arrived, which Herod had commanded should be as magnificent as the land could afford.

Alexandra and Mariamne went again to see the body, now embalmed, surrounded by aromatics and adorned with flowers. Their grief was not less acute though more subdued, particularly that of Alexandra, who bent over the coffin and remained long looking at her child, and when she retired seemed to stifle the sobs which were labouring in her bosom. Mariamne's cheek was colourless, and there was in addition to poignant woe, an expression of such deep anxiety, as almost deprived her of the power of utterance. She had not asked for Herod since she first saw her brother's corpse. Many messengers had been dispatched to bring tidings of Zillah, who was not better.

It was decided that the interment should take place at the tombs of the kings, and not at Modin where the sepulchres of the Asmoneans were. In the morning the people gathered together. Soon after the sun had risen bands of horsemen proceeded, after them came a mixed multitude on various animals or crowded in vehicles; bands of priests followed these bearing in turns the bier of their departed brother: immediately after them were mourning women, accompanied by minstrels, and the king, and all the relations of the deceased: behind were guards and mourners, and the population of the region round. They rested during the heat of the day, and at eventide approached the tombs near Jerusalem. As soon as the headmost horsemen reached the summit of a rising ground that had concealed them, there rose a wail of woe, mingled with the melancholy sound of flutes and soft recorders, from a great portion of the people who had come not only from the city but from afar, and covered the sides of the surrounding hills. Their wail was answered by the great procession accompanying the body,

and no one was louder in his lament than Herod.

The night had closed in when the coffin was placed at the entrance of the sepulchre, and the golden urn containing the parts to be consumed on the funeral pyre, formed of resinous woods intermixed with odours and spices, to which oven the poorest were eager to add. The wailing rose and fell like distant sounds borne on the uncertain winds. When darkness veiled the heavens, the pyre was lighted: as soon as the flame was seen the cries of grief were redoubled, and the people rent their garments and wept. The flames had not ascended far above the urn, when a female form without sandals, with torn garments and dishevelled hair, came wailing and bounding through the crowd. Her speed and distracted look spread alarm, and many said that it was a spirit. She rushed to the projecting pinnacle of the tomb, and uttered so wild and shrill a cry of agony, that those around were awe struck and silenced. Herod looked and perceived that it was Zillah. Mariamne approached the base of the pinnacle on which she stood, but

her entreaties were not heard, and Zillah shook her dishevelled hair, and gazed with the trance-like look of phrenzy on the funeral pile, while her quivering lip seemed to speak. This trance-like look gradually vanished before the varying and encreasing expressions that successively crossed her face; her bosom heaved with smothered respiration, while imperfect sighs were heard, as if the thoughts that agonized her, when moulded into sounds, would melt the soul to tears. She continued for a minute's space with her eyes fixed on the burning pyre, then wildly glanced around, while deep disappointment and woe overspread her countenance; then, in piteous accents, said;

"He is not there, where have ye borne him?"

She paused, appeared perplexed, and seemed to think, then continued;

"Have they lain him in Engedi, or whelmed him in the Asphaltic Sea?"

These confused ideas began to recal her wandering thought. She cast her eyes to heaven, and muttered distressingly, then a storm of

conflicting passions gathered over her ghastly face. The monarch quailed and trembled, and in a hurried and fear-stricken voice, directed the attendants to bear her away; but they seemed confused and so melted by the sight, that they did not obey before she fixed her eyes on Herod, and the storm of grief and passion burst from her livid lips.

"Cursed be the monarch who smote him secretly;
The burden of the curses of Israel on him.
O earth, cover not the blood of the innocent,
Let not its voice have a resting-place on thee.
Destruction and Death, declare that ye have heard the fame thereof.
The mighty dead tremble from beneath."

At these last words her voice became tremulous and hollow: her eyes gleaming with unearthly passion were still fixed on the king, who continued making uncertain signs to his attendants to take her away, while he seemed as fascinated by her look as if a spirit gazed upon him. She continued with utter scorn;

"See, he lieth down as a lion,

He coucheth as a lioness,
Saying, 'Who shall rouse me?'"

Her countenance was suffused with more than mortal fervour; and she added, in tones that thrilled the surrounding multitude;

"He who looketh down from the heavens,
He who seeth all the children of men,
The Lord shall smite thee with madness,
With blindness and astonishment of heart,
Thy life shall hang in doubt before thee,
By day and by night shall fear pursue thee,
Thou shalt have none assurance of thy life,
Thou shalt gnash with thy teeth and pine away."

The king roused by these appalling words, commanded with a voice of mingled fear and anger, "the demoniac to be seized and borne away." She stood trying to look through the flames, uttering convulsive sobs. The wailing of the people round now rose again and blended with the mournful flutes and the more distant cries of grief. Mariamne stood immoveable with a look of abstraction bordering on mute despair, for the wild words of Zillah corresponded with all that she had heard, and accorded with the

dreadful presentiments that had haunted her mind, so that not a ray of hope yet gleamed on the gulph of misery which floated before her mental vision. Alexandra was seated on the ground near the coffin, covered with sackcloth and ashes, and so absorbed in grief as not to have heeded what had passed. Salome had heard and seen the whole, and privately repeated Herod's order to seize and carry away the frantic Zillah. No sooner did she perceive the messengers approaching her, than she wildly repeated;

"He is not there—where have ye borne him?"

Then sprung on a projecting rock and alighting on the ground ran towards the tomb. Her steps were arrested by the coffin, the moment she saw the face of her betrothed love, she clasped her hands above her head and said in accents of the deepest woe;

"Oh, he *is* dead, and shall return no more to his house.

Thy spirit still hovers near—

O had I the wings of a dove I would flee away with thee and be at rest—Take me with thee, take thy poor love with thee."

She sunk upon his bosom, and when her body was raised by the attendants the spirit had fled. Louder lamentation and tears told the dreadful tale. Before the coffin was deposited in the mansion of the dead, Mariamne had fallen senseless to the earth and was borne to the city, followed by the trembling guilty Herod and a great multitude.

CHAPTER XIV.

ALTHOUGH jealousy of Aristobulus popularity had brought into action the viler part of Herod's character, and led him to commit an act of murder, all the better feelings of his nature were not yet wholly destroyed. The misery he had entailed on his beloved Mariamne, and the dread he had of her discovering his perfidious crime, wrought on his conscience, and made him for a season the victim of remorse. He clothed himself in sackcloth, fasted, wept and mourned. This conduct and his increasing affection expelled from the mind of Mariamne the strange suspicions of her husband she had involuntarily allowed to steal into it. She did not doubt the sincerity of Babarrah or Dermah, but concluded, that the evident apprehension they

had shewn for her brother's safety rested on better foundation than her own.

Herod, Cypros, and Salome aided by Ananeel, now reinstated in the High Priesthood, carefully and cautiously made known not only to the people but to Mariamne the account of his death as told by the king, Nodamah, and a Moor who had been for some time about the royal person. Though Mariamne's mind was lulled to a state of repose, and she again returned the affection of her husband; the majority of the people suspected the truth, and the report that an Essene had slain one of the murderers, and had denounced the king to Babarrah and his horsemen, prevailed through the city and in many parts of the country.

Salome often conversed with Herod on his death, who never withdrew from the subject though every word stung him to the soul, and she more than once hinted, that many kings instead of honouring their rivals, thought themselves called on to sacrifice their own feelings to preserve their countries from the horrors of civil war.

Alexandra had smothered to the utmost of

her ability her conviction that her son had been murdered by the king, and shut herself up maturing her schemes of vengeance and escape.

Babarrah, after consulting with Dermah, determined to go to Samaria, and then assist Alexandra in expelling the tyrant from his throne and separating Mariamne from the murderer of her brother, and afterwards to escape from Judæa and return to their native deserts.

Babarrah's deportment to Herod on his return from Samaria, was precisely the same as it was before he knew of the guilty deed. The king however did not under-rate his power of dissembling, and longed to remove him. He bestowed on him the highest honours, and sent him with some legions to suppress the incursions of various predatory hordes, with the hope that he would meet with death. Previous to his departure he sent a letter for Alexandra to Cleopatra detailing the murder of her son, and imploring her to induce Antony to punish the assassin. The Egyptian, whose own hands were stained with a brother's and a sister's blood, cared but little for the crime, but coveted the

provinces over which Herod ruled, and eagerly availed herself of the circumstance to destroy him and obtain his kingdom. She therefore urged the Triumvir to examine into the affair, and succeeded in making him summon Herod to Laodicea.

This order he would, if he had been sufficiently powerful, willingly have resisted, as an infringement on his royal dignity, but he was constrained to obey it, and as a last, and perhaps surer resource, depended for acquittal on his bribes and address. In the mean time he concealed his chagrin and mortification from Mariamne, and declared to her his joy at the opportunity of vindicating himself before the Triumvir and the world.

Notwithstanding Mariamne had returned his affection and was confidential in her manner, he did not feel certain that she had no lurking suspicion of her brother's having died a violent death, and induced Salome, under the pretext that she might suspect Nodamah, who had been the friend of Antigonus, to try and fathom her.

Salome's apparent grief and the concern she had pretended for Mariamne during the illness

that followed her brother's funeral, had placed them on a less hostile footing than before, and gave her some opportunities of conversing alone with the queen. But as she mistrusted her own influence and power, she artfully induced her mother Cypros to assist her. When not likely to be interrupted, they spoke with evident satisfaction of the approaching examination into the cause of Aristobulus death, and even inferred that her husband had desired it, since he was present, and Sanballat was known to be an enemy to the Asmonean rival of his late friend Antigonus.

Mariamne was yet weak from illness, during which she had suffered so much grief, so clearly saw the emptiness of all human hopes, and had reflected so deeply on a future state, that her noble soul had become even more purified, elevated and simple than before.

Cypros began by remarking;

"Alas the heart of man is prone to evil, and those who are not of the commonwealth of Israel are evil altogether, and fierce, and unforgiving."

Mariamne rejoined;

" The beasts of the field remember kindnesses, and resent the injuries done to them by man. I never heard even of a beast of prey attacking but when impelled by fear or hunger—yet each appears to have been formed originally with a claw, a tooth, or an instinct adapted to some particular destruction. Man only has a mind capable of committing slaughter by rule, and with the idea of gaining glory by his deeds—Man only has taught his offspring not to forgive, but to revenge."

The old woman continued ;

" I cannot think that Antony will find aught against Nodamah—he might have sported roughly, half-feeling some resentment, but Oh no he would not have hurt him. Moreover the king was by, who I know loved his brother, and would have slain him in his wrath, even on an attempt at insult."

Salome then said ;

" Mother thou sayest right, my brother loved him like his own soul, and has grieved for him with bitter grief—It rends my heart to see his sunken cheek, to hear his moans, and to behold him clothed in sackcloth."

Cypros directly added;

"My son honoured his funeral to the utmost of his power—even our father Abraham nor the wealthy Solomon had greater or more costly things—Poor Zillah, in her madness, she accused us all of killing him—well her heart was broken and so she must be forgiven. Mariamne at her name began to weep and said;

"I had begun to weave a veil for her bridal dress, and little thought that I should strew it on her bier. They sprung up together like two lilies of the valley from united stems; when one was trampled down, the other withered and died. Even the mighty pass away like shadows and are no more remembered; but the untimely deaths of the young and lovely are tales at which the children of future days shall weep—Ah, far better would the rich gifts, and odours have been bestowed on their nuptials, than on their funeral."

She paused, looked towards heaven and with streaming eyes repeated;

"The judgments of Jehovah are truth, they are just altogether—

The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away,
blessed be his holy name.
Few and evil were the days of the years of their
lives—
His mercy is as a morning cloud, and as the
early dew that is drunk up by the everlast-
ing sun."

She bent her head in token of resignation, but the tears still trickled down her cheeks.

Mariamne had accidentally frustrated the intentions of her examiners, which produced a long silence. Old Cypros shed tears of real sorrow: Salome tried to weep.

The queen renewed the discourse;

"My grief has been doubled by seeing the sad effects of my brother's death on the king; had he thought that he was even exposed to danger he says he might have saved him. Perhaps some vital part was broken by the exertion and he sunk exhausted—Yet it seems strange that they did not directly raise him and bear his body to the bank."

Cypros shook her aged head and rejoined;

"Alas, when evil hath befallen us and we feel

the sorrow it bringeth compassing us about, we look back and see that by prudence and thought we might perhaps have avoided or lessened it—When sudden dangers come upon us, we seldom are as ready of thought or hand as when we perceive them afar off and prepare to resist them like men in the battle array."

Salome with desponding voice and manner added;

"What fearful astonishment could have been greater than assailed them when he sunk and did not appear again? In his agony he might have grasped some weed, some root or stone: the water was deep where they were—he might in his struggling have gone far from them—The days of man are determined, the number of his months are with Jehovah, He hath appointed his bounds that he cannot pass; so let us submit to his judgments."

After a short time she added;

"It would be cruel to think that Nodamah intended evil to the youth—Yet I wish he had not been there."

Mariamne mildly and simply replied;

"I wish so too, for he began the sport; and, as Cypros says, might have remembered, as he plunged him beneath the water, that he had stood between him and the favour of a crowned king. The remembrance of sorrow comes often enough uncalled for.—Why should we open our wounds and make our hearts bleed afresh, when it cannot avail us. Such misfortunes are the thorns in the valley of our pilgrimage, which may more safely lead us to the gates of Paradise. I am weary—May guardian angels protect you, and guide your steps into the paths of holiness and peace."

They could not disobey this kind command, but did obeisance and left her,—not satisfied, nor yet disappointed.

Mariamne had watched with restless anxiety the change in her husband's health and manner. He was frequently plunged into the deepest melancholy; sometimes he was most kind and yielding in his deportment to those about him; at other times he was suspicious, sensitive at the least degree of interference, and to her observing eye, mistrustful of all he heard. She

concluded that the words of Zillah, and the insinuations of the people, added to her brother's death, had most deeply affected him, and looked forward to his wounds being healed by time and the renewed confidence of the people. When she spoke to Dermah of him, her replies were always general and sometimes indefinite; and when pressed closer, her praises were bestowed on his valour and magnificence. These circumstances rendered her unhappy, and not at rest.

While these occurrences transpired in Judæa, Herod, with the perversity of human nature, and while meditating his late barbarity, was endeavouring to induce the good Hyrcanus to return to Jerusalem, since he feared the Parthian monarch might incite him to try and recover the regal authority without the pontifical dignity. He knew that Hyrcanus had never been formally deposed from the throne, though he had been expelled Jerusalem by Antigonus, and was only incapacitated from performing the functions of the pontifical office. The people loved him, not only because he was an Asmonean, but because he was mild, charitable, and humane.

Herod perceived that if he recovered his throne, his want of ability to govern would be amply compensated by the talents of the young Aristobulus, which circumstance increased his fear of Hyrcanus backed by the Parthian power and the affections of the people.

The crafty Santacalla was selected by Herod to win the Parthian king Phraates to his wishes. He went loaded with costly presents, money, and promises. So well did the subtle embassador perform his master's orders, that the good Hyrcanus, in whose bosom (like the rest of his nation) a desire to die in Jerusalem was predominant, consented to return. It was not until Herod was on the point of setting out for Laodicea that Hyrcanus reached Jerusalem, borne down with grief at the death of Aristobulus, and only desiring to embrace his children, pray in the Temple, and be gathered unto his fathers.

He heard from Dermah all the particulars relating to his grandson's death; and from that hour mistrust and melancholy were pourtrayed upon his brow. Herod's suspicion and fears

made him desirous of being acquainted with every action of his prisoner, and he soon learnt that he had held several interviews with Dermah, possessed of that knowledge he prepared to leave Jerusalem with encreased reluctance.

Salome, whose hatred for Mariamne had not diminished, affected great grief at parting with her brother, and being alone, availed herself of the opportunity, and said;

"It has been thought that Alexandra instigated the Egyptian queen to urge the Triumvir thus to insult you; but I think it some vile scheme of hers to cut off our beloved Mariamne, since she knows as well as we do that Antony has long desired to possess her; as long as you exist, the subtle woman is aware that her attempts would all be vain. You numbered with the dead, poor Mariamne would fall an easy sacrifice to her vengeful jealousy. Antony may think you the obstacle opposed to his wish, and so aquiesce in Cleopatra's request, and cut you off that he may not be frustrated. O my brother, cannot you circumvent their base inten-

tions, and avoid going to Laodicea? I dread the worst."

She fell on his neck and wept, while he was agitated and perplexed at her remarks. He however dissembled his thoughts, assured her that her affection led her unnecessarily to anticipate evil, and bade her farewell.

Herod had repented; he had felt the agony of remorse, and the stings of conscience; and had shrunk with horror at the thoughts of repeating his crimes. But he suddenly saw, before his eyes, the threatening phantoms of two rivals to all he held dear on earth,—the one to his kingly rank and power, the other to his love, the last had become an absorbing passion, and would at least have balanced with the former: to these was added the fear of discovery by Hyrcanus, whom though mild and forgiving, he knew would raise the nation as soon as he was gone, if he were assured of his guilt. His spies had told him of his interviews with Dermah, his own knowledge of human nature informed him, that his friend Babarrah was satisfied of Aristobulus unfair death, and he knew the noble Arab too

well, not to be convinced, that he was only waiting until he could level an irreparable blow at his power or life. It was his nature to feel a fierce inclination to resent the machinations of a woman like Cleopatra; as well as to feel a burning and reckless spirit of resistance against any thing that threatened him with danger.

He strode about his private chamber lashing up his fury, and yielding to his jealousy of Antony until he thought its pangs might haunt him in the grave.

At the same time he magnified the friendly conduct of Malchus the King of Arabia towards Hyrcanus into a conspiracy against him, which had been partly matured when he visited him on his way from Babylon.

The repentance and consequent feelings of the monarch had no firm foundation. They were not built on sorrow for his wickedness, but on the sandy basis of a disposition with some kind and noble principles unsupported by a dependence on Providence, and with scarce a conviction of future retribution. The various apprehensions that at once assailed him destroyed the pre-

carious state of mind into which his recent atrocity and the pious example of Mariamne had brought him, and he plunged at once into the fallacious stream which hurried him into the vortex of crime and misery—He thus held converse to himself.

" Shall the wretched minion of that fly, that crocodile, that mistress of the land of bondage, take my Mariamne? Shall that spawn of slime and serpents, seek to get her paramour to destroy me, as he did her brother, that she may glut her jealous vengeance on my beauteous queen? She would rather that I should plunge a dagger into her bosom—Did I not once promise to do so instead of suffering Antony to have her, and did she not embrace me for the promise? She did, and well I know that she has not changed her wish—Ah I have it, and that's all safe.

" I wish Hyrcanus too were in Paradise. Surely he has seen enough of life in well nigh eighty winters to be cloyed with it—He has lost his ears—perchance the old man would die piecemeal. The next cut would be his head, and that the intrigues of Malchus may procure

him—Am I to be hunted from my throne by women and dotards?

"Curses on my folly for placing an army under the orders of that fearless Arab—It was adding wings and talons to a mewed up eagle—I might as well expect a Lybian Lion to fawn and crouch to his pursuer, as that penetrating Arab to bend to my wishes—I cannot give the word that would awake the dead, or methinks I would recal from his rotting sleep the foolish boy that was driven by praises to destruction—had he not died, such power and popularity as he possessed would have recalled the remembrance of what he might have been, and so excited a wish to be what I am, and then would have followed war and all its blessings on a savage, exhausted people—There seems much good in the general destiny of events, it were perhaps better to yield to their mighty stream than attempt to contend against it.—Joshua, Samuel, Cyrus, Cæsar, were all means for producing some great ends and why should not I be so?"

He summoned his uncle Joseph and held with him a long conversation on affairs of state,

and gave him directions how to act during his absence at Laodicea. Soon afterwards Herod left his capital without his usual retinue and hastened to obey the summons of the Triumvir.

CHAPTER XV.

Mazrah and Menahem were both on the confines of the city, the former in the habit of receiving continual intelligence from Dermah. On the departure of Herod he hastened to Babarrah, who, having terminated the campaign, returned to Jerusalem. He soon held several conversations with Hyrcanus whom he seriously advised to escape and throw himself on the protection of the King of Arabia.

Alexandra strongly urged him to follow the advice of Babarrah and thus save himself from impending destruction. The old Prince had seen too many reverses to be anxious to preserve the few remaining years which, in the common course of nature, he had to pass on this earth, and professed the imperishable desire of dying in Jerusalem. Babarrah foresaw, that the extermination of the Asmonean race would

follow the first of the tyrant's murders, and so longed to save them from the threatening ruin. He, in conjunction with Alexandra and Dermah, tried every argument and persuasion to induce him to fly to Arabia, but in vain; at length circumstances occurred which led to Mariamne's joining them in their intreaties.

Joseph, to whom Herod had intrusted with Mariamne the executive government during his absence, was advanced in years, with an understanding capable of selecting and pursuing the right course, but with a disposition too confiding for a ruler, and liable to be hourly imposed on by the crafty people whose affairs he now administered. He was zealous for the honour, welfare, and happiness of his nephew, and in his attempts to increase the estimation of his merit among his family was injudicious and so persevering as to excite their smiles.

The common routine of business, and the requisite attention to the queen, gave him continual opportunities of exhibiting this amiable weakness. Mariamne had often rallied him on the number, warmth, and variety of his enco-

miums. His niece, Salome, produced a long scroll on which they were inscribed. The aged Cypros smiled at his conduct, but never contradicted his assertions. Joseph's affection for Herod would have produced a similar feeling for Mariamne, merely because she was his wife, even if her virtues had not excited it. Her beauty and conduct rendered her the object of his enthusiastic and respectful adoration. Nothing transpired in the city that he did not immediately make known to her, and was most confidential in all his communications. This conduct, and his unguarded admiration, did not escape the vindictive Salome, who carefully registered in her memory every minute attention or expression of interest.

Once, when alone with Mariamne, he entered on his usual theme,—the praises of Herod, an enumeration of his kindnesses, and the proofs of his love. The queen wishing to see how far he would pursue the topic, jocularly resisted him, until at length he said;

"If Michael himself were to speak, he could not give a more convincing proof of his love for

you than the secret order with which I am entrusted;—a command which shews that the king cannot exist without you, and that even in the grave he would not be separated from you. Should Antony at the instigation of the vile Cleopatra slay him, he has made me swear to plunge this dagger into your bosom."

He displayed, with an air of triumph, the weapon which Herod usually wore, to the astonished Mariamne, adding, as he raised it;

" He said, that he merely deputed me to perform a solemn promise he had made to you."

Mariamne's cheek was for an instant flushed with crimson, for she could not doubt the truth of Joseph's words, then resumed its paler hue; neither her voice nor manner underwent any change, but indignation filled her bosom, and horrid doubtful thoughts rushed through her mind with irresistible impetuosity. She looked near her, and clasping her infant to her bosom concealed, while caressing it, the burning tears that gushed into her eyes.

The infatuated Joseph mistook this effect his revelation of the secret had produced, for conviction, that his declaration of Herod's unbounded love was true. Mariamne saw, with quickness, that it proceeded from two-fold jealousy, and a heart capable of contemplating the murdering of all who thwarted its savage passions. At the same moment the warning words of the dying soldier flashed across her memory, and undefined forebodings, formed partly of thoughts and partly of feelings, followed in rapid and harrowing succession. She pressed her infant to her bosom, hurried to her private room, and there, in secret, gave way to that bitterness of woe a woman feels when all her hopes are swept away by one fell blast. The unthinking Joseph, eager to complete his supposed triumph, and obtain a declaration that he had not overvalued Herod's love, followed the queen almost immediately after she had left the apartment. Salome, from a contiguous corridor had seen Mariamne pass towards her private rooms with a hurried gait, and directly entered the passage from which she had come,

and met Joseph pursuing her steps. He stopped, encountered her look, and involuntarily blushed. The demon spirit turned and went exulting to another part of the Palace. Joseph was conscious of embarrassment, but he never conjectured that any inference prejudicial either to Mariamne or himself could be drawn from the circumstance; indeed so slight was the impression on his mind, that he not only never mentioned it, but even forgot it.

Mariamne recovered her composure sufficiently to appear in the evening, and even attended the sacrifice in the Temple, and there offered up fervent prayers for protection from her heavenly Father. When she retired, her thoughts were fully occupied with the dreadful secret, and its probable effects; her chief anxiety was for her children; without her watchful eye, she knew not one whom she could trust, excepting Dermah, to bring them up in the paths of piety and virtue. For their sakes she considered it her duty to communicate to Hyrcanus and her mother her wishes relating to them, lest a sudden and violent death should

overtake her. If she could have relied on the forbearance and discretion of Alexandra, she would have made known to her as a mother the discovery: but, in addition to her want of judgment, she had naturally cherished a hatred for Herod that amounted to a just detestation and abhorrence; of this Mariamne had long been aware, and conjectured, that it arose from her considering the death of Aristobulus, in some degree, occasioned by the king not interfering when Nodamah and the others attacked him in the water. Although she felt deeply her husband's inhuman order to murder her, she saw no utility in embittering the latter years of Hyrcanus by relating it to him, and could not suppress the noble pride, of not becoming her husband's accuser. Perhaps she retained some lingering hopes of happier days.

Before she retired to rest, she went to the room where her infants were sleeping, and sat for a time watching their peaceful faces and scarcely moving breasts. At first maternal love alone filled her bosom; soon her look became more fixed, and her countenance expressive of

deep and troubled anxiety, while these unmingled thoughts intensely occupied her mind.

" If I am murdered, who will protect you? Your father will be with me numbered among the dead. The good Hyrcanus must soon follow, for he is old. My mother cannot save you. Would the fierce contenders for a kingdom allow two springing flowers to stop their hot career, and not crush them with their iron tread? No, no; men are made of sterner mettle than to feel for babes who might deprive them of a diadem. Were I dead, I could be contented to hear that some ruffian hand had sealed your little eyes for ever, and stopped the balmy fragrance of your breath."

It was a horrid thought, and she awoke from her reverie, bent over them, and gently kissed their lips. Tears flowed from her eyes, and she placed her hand on her brow, while the anticipations of future misery crowded into her soul.

" The blood-stained Cleopatra is prowling round, and would prey upon thy father's kingdom.—She, whose hands are steeped in the

blood of her nearest kindred, would, like a she wolf, seize you.—She knows no remorse; your innocence would not save you.—She would drown the babes in their father's blood.—I have no brother to raise his arm and shield you; the jealous waters overwhelmed him.—I am made to drink the bitterest dregs of woe. My race driven from their throne, slain, brought to untimely graves, my husband menaced with death, my babes to be cast on the wide world to become the victims of the merciless—And I doomed by my husband to be sacrificed to his departed shade—to be immolated to the accursed Moloch. Woe, woe, which way shall I flee? Where shall I seek for refuge?"

She clasped her hands and gazed on her yet sleeping infants with a look of despair. One awoke, and smiling, stretched its little hands towards his mother. In an instant she burst into a flood of tears; and as she folded the baby to her bosom, exclaimed;

"O where is the refuge for those that make
widows their prey;
And lurk after the inheritance of the fatherless?

To whom shall I flee for help in this day of desolation?
To whom will pass the glory of my race?
I will flee to Him who protecteth the widow and the fatherless,
Who guardeth him who hath none to help him.
Glory is but a dying flame:
The wind sweepeth over all earthly things,
And not even a transient shadow marketh where they were.
I know that the avenger liveth—He the last will stand above the dead;
In him will I trust to glorify my race,
He shall give retribution to the souls of all the dwellers upon earth."

She knelt, and holding up her children, besought, with fervid spirit, her Creator to guide and preserve them, and lead them in the way of truth. After her excitement had subsided, she remained weeping over the unconscious innocents who had fallen again to sleep.

The morning had dawned and she was surprised at the sudden entrance of many of her attendants all wailing and rending their gar-

ments. When they saw her thus disconsolate, they thought that she knew the tidings which had reached the city, and continued their lamentations. Her distracted air and unchanged dress made them conclude, that she had been mourning the live long night, and they only answered her enquiries by cries of woe. Dermah at length appeared with consternation on her brow; and after paying a hasty obeisance, stood looking at Mariamne, then on the children. The queen at length, with stifled accents, exclaimed;

"I am prepared; tell me, I implore thee, what has happened?"

Dermah instantly replied;

"Antony has slain him."

"Who? what?" asked the queen in a hollow voice.

"The king, the king," replied the attendants.

Mariamne uttered a loud shriek, rushed to her childrens couch, and extending her mantle, exclaimed;

"They shall not have them; help, save them. Call Babarrah—Summon the Asmonean guards. —Help——"

She seized, with a sudden spring, a spear that hung upon the wall, and with an hysterical convulsion, said;

"Now she wolf come with the eagle by your side, and I will shew you what a mother and an Asmonean Princess can effect."

At that moment Babarrah entered the apartment; he looked but for a moment, then bent, and said, when rising, as he drew his faulchion;

"My queen, the guards are here, and I await your orders."

His appearance and these words restored her mind to its balance, and she commanded him in a voice that ensured obedience.

"Seize on Joseph—Send an hundred men, ready with the bow and spear, to guard my children. Take such precautions as seem good to your better judgment to secure the peace of the city. Send to our captains to guard the fenced cities, and occupy the passes."

Then, in a louder voice, added;

"Suffer not on your peril a Roman to pass the gates."

Reuben and Jonathan, now high advanced,

had followed Babarrah, and as soon as the words had passed her lips, summoned a chosen band, who entered as she ceased speaking—She waved her spear and they formed in an instant round her, when she thus briefly addressed them ;

" Ye warriors of Israel—Those babes are mine. The she wolf of Egypt would lap their blood. They are the children of your victorious Herod and the last of the Asmonean line—To you I commit them, and remember that, I in their defence would die, and so expect the same of you."

A fierce murmur pervaded the throng as she threw down the spear, and casting one parting look on her children followed Babarrah, who had returned, to the audience hall filled with the chief captains and surrounded by faithful guards.

Her attire was disordered her face pale and haggard, she breathed deeply, yet her step was firm ; glances of poignant grief crossed her brow and were banished by the quick return of that high resolve to which the great emergency was working up her soul. She ascended the throne,

and not daring to hesitate, immediately addressed the assembly.

" Elders, Captains and honourable men of Israel. A dreadful report has been rumoured through the city, of our king having been slain at the instigation of the enemies of Israel. Though I am overcome with grief, it would not become me were I to forget in my calamity the duty I owe to my people. This report may be false, but lest it should prove true, I have ordered those measures to be adopted which will insure the safety of the city and the inhabitants, as well as of the country. Remember that I now act in the name of your king, and command you all to your various posts, and recommend a vigilant watch to be kept on every side, and that all discussions on the affairs of our government be avoided. Messengers have already sped their way to Laodicea ; until I hear of their return, or of some more authentic intelligence, I again command you each to his post ; while I await in anguish fearing that this dire intelligence may be true—Accept the sincerest thanks for your ready zeal."

She could scarcely pronounce these words and was assisted to her apartment, where Dermah awaited her. The manner in which she had passed the night, the unexpectedness of the report, and the state of mind which the discovery of the king's sanguinary command had produced, were the sufficient causes for the brevity and homeliness of her address. It had, notwithstanding, the desired effect, and proved to the people, that their queen was not inefficient.

Many enquiries were made for the temporary procurator Joseph. Babarrah had so rapidly and secretly performed the order for his seizure, that he was in close confinement within his house before he could communicate with any of his friends and adherents.

Mariamne knowing the wisdom, courage and tried fidelity of Babarrah summoned him to her presence, and told him and Dermah the dreadful secret she had discovered, and declared that anticipations of her children's future misery, and apprehensions for her own life were the reasons for her desiring him to be instantly confined, and requested Babarrah to see every attention

paid to his prisoner, but to be careful that he held no correspondence with any one.

The artificial state to which she had wrought herself had prevented her from feeling the full effects of the dreadful shock she had really sustained.

This Babarrah perceived and dreading the force of the reaction, attempted to anticipate it by decidedly expressing his doubts of the truth of the report, and as decidedly stating his suspicions that it had not been raised without some motive; he even boldly pronounced the king himself as the first promulgator of it, and expressed his hope that Hyrcanus would keep within his Palace, and have near him two of his own friends, on whose discretion he could rely, and as many of the known adherents of Herod.

Mariamne understood the full import of his words, and trembling drew her hand across her pallid brow and in a subdued tone said;

"O God, O God, preserve and guide thine handmaid."

Babarrah did not weaken the impression his

words had produced, and remained silent, while his quivering lip truly told that he felt acutely for his queen and friend. Dermah respectfully approached her and in the most soothing manner intreated her to retire and take some rest. She thanked her friend but firmly refused until Babarrah reported to her the state of the city. He had prepared to give her that information, by ordering officers to bring to him from time to time reports from various quarters, and only left her for a short space before he returned with satisfactory information.

Fear and doubt had so diminished the affection Mariamne had cherished for her husband, that the intelligence of his death did not excite in her the poignant grief she would have endured for one of whom no fear could be felt. The account arriving so soon after her obtaining confirmation of his ferocity, and headlong violence of passion, had increased her fears and confusion of mind and led her to feel more for her children than for him, though she suffered greatly while remaining in doubt, and was compelled to exert all her mental vigour to prevent the surprize and

consternation from rendering her incapable of reflection and decision of conduct.

She allowed Dermah to lead her to her couch, and to bring her children; she folded them in her arms, and her exhausted mind and body were soon under the powerful dominion of the profoundest sleep.

Salome was among those whom the report of Herod's death greatly affected, since on him chiefly depended her consequence and wealth. As her affection for him was nominal, she was able, with more than usual quickness, to note every thing which transpired, that she might convert whatever might be useful to her in the prosecution of her own selfish schemes, whether the report should prove true or false. It was evident to her when the queen appeared, that she had not been undressed during the night. Joseph was no where to be found. Every avenue in the Palace was filled with armed men, all devoted to Mariamne. The city was unusually full of soldiers, so distributed, that no party could be formed unobserved. All the gates were closed and doubly guarded, and even the

Roman legions, under Julius, virtually defied. These circumstances led her to suspect that Mariamne had seized the kingdom with the assistance of Babarrah; and that she would soon be taken, and at least imprisoned. Full of these conjectures, she sought her mother Cypros, who, though in a state of great alarm, was too observant to acquiesce in Salome's suspicions, but bade her be circumspect, since the queen was not only capable and firm, but surrounded by the ablest in the land, and would not hesitate in punishing with rigour any one who should make public such sentiments. She expressed her astonishment at the disappearance of Joseph; and agreed with her daughter to carefully observe every occurrence, and obtain all the information in their power.

On the ensuing day, various opinions were agitated among the people, and the latent disaffected spirit began to shew itself. Some were loud in their attachment to the king; others hinted at Aristobulus murder, and the justness of Herod's death, supposing, as was reported, that Antony had tortured him; many spoke of

Hyrcanus, as being their rightful king; while the majority looked to Mariamne.

Two days passed and no intelligence arrived. The suspense in which the population had been, in great measure, skilfully kept, could no longer be sustained; and the intolerance and fierceness of party spirit rapidly increased and infected even the soldiers, so that Babarrah became doubtful of the number on which, in case of emergency, he could depend.

Alexandra had been, at the first receipt of the intelligence, secretly pleased, and looked forward to the throne becoming again the entire possession of her family; but when she was aware of the increasing ferment in the opinions of the people, and the apprehension of Babarrah, her courage failed her, and she dreaded being exposed to the dangers of civil discord. As no information had reached them from Laodicea, the doubts even of Babarrah began to waver, and consequently their anxieties to increase. He did not advise that any decisive step should be taken with regard to the succession to the regal dignity, since the jealous Roman would

probably oppose any one who should assume, or even nominate, the succession.

Alexandra, conscious that Cleopatra would endeavour to obtain the kingdom, secretly determined to try and circumvent her, by alluring the Triumvir with Mariamne's transcendant beauty. She proposed more than one cousultation, magnified the degree of existing popular agitation, descanted on the known violence and cruelty of the people when excited, and expressed her dread that the royal race would be exterminated by a civil war.

Babarrah owned that Julius the Roman lieutenant had officially declared any attempt to dispose of the kingdom, would be deemed an act of rebellion, and punished as such. At this declaration Mariamne's pale cheek was suffused with crimson, and her dilating nostril told the indignation which she felt, but cautiously suppressed. Hyrcanus expatiated on the horrors of civil war, and thought death preferable to being the cause of it. Alexandra availed herself of these sentiments, so favourable to her views, and vehemently urged the necessity and

propriety of their all placing themselves under the protection of the Roman eagles. No one assented, but none dissented; even Mariamne, galling as it was to her feelings, knew too well the obstinacy and power of the Roman government, to wish to entail destruction on her people and herself. It was therefore resolved to communicate their intentions to Julius, and secretly prepare to leave the city for the neighbouring camp.

Babarrah saw the good policy of the step, since it would render the appointment of any other to the regal office an act of flagrant injustice; yet he doubted the purity of Alexandra's motives, and feared that it might entail unhappiness on Mariamne.

Preparations were made on the following day for their removal. Salome, through her agents, soon discovered that some momentous step was on the point of being taken, and by dint of perseverance ascertained the intentions of the queen. The supposed death of her brother had made her apprehensive; the decisive conduct in seeking protection from the Roman, left her with

the prospect of sinking into mediocrity and insignificance, and rendered her feelings of resentment more bitter since the mortification of impotence was likely to be endured by her, if Mariamne were to receive the crown.

Julius was prepared to receive them; and Babarrah had announced to the queen that they were only waiting her commands to leave the city, when a messenger reached the Palace with letters from the king, assuring Mariamne not only of his safety, but of the high distinction shewn him by Antony, and the complete refutation of every calumny that had been advanced against him. Mariamne felt joy at the intelligence of his safety, though she did not anticipate his return with any degree of pleasure, for his horrid orders were fresh in her memory. The instant she received the intelligence, she retired with Babarrah; and immediately afterwards it was announced with pomp and ceremony, and the mourning turned into joy and banquetting. Salome smiled with unusual satisfaction, since she saw that by this change in the posture of affairs, her work of vengeance was half com-

pleted. The situation in which she met Joseph, Mariamne's conduct and speech to the guards, her apparent indifference on the receipt of Herod's death, and her subsequent intention to escape, were so many causes of exhiliration, which was still more elated by the certainty that Babarrah and Dermah would be exposed to the monarch's jealous wrath. Under the mask of unbounded joy at her brother's safety she revelled in the anticipated delights of vengeance. Alexandra's dread became so great, that she took refuge with her father Hyrcanus and gave way to forebodings of evil. Babarrah and Dermah saw their danger, but did not allow the least symptom even of transient agitation to be perceived on their countenances.

The fears of Alexandra had increased to so alarming a height, that she appeared to have lost the use of her reason, and talked of imploring the interference of Salome and the mercy of Herod, and excited considerable fears even in the good Hyrcanus, who convened in the queen's apartment the whole of those concerned in their late intention to escape.

They all remained silent excepting Alexandra who wept, wrung her hands and declared her belief, "that Herod would slay them all." Reasoning and expostulation were equally inefficient to suppress her clamours or excite her courage; at length Hyrcanus almost commanded her silence and thus addressed them.

"My children, few and evil have the days of the years of my life been; I have returned from wandering in the wilderness and seen again the Vision of Inheritance, so deem my pilgrimage ended, and therefore am ready to be gathered unto my fathers—We have been moved by fear to act unwisely and precipitately, and as enemies lurk on every side, the matter may bring down the wrath of the king on us. For you my children is my soul troubled, and lest evil should happen to you I am resolved to take the burden on my own head—Why would you attempt to dissuade me? Is it not better that one should suffer, than evil happen to many? On whom can evil fall better, than on one who hath numbered his days until his strength is but labour and sorrow, who is soon to be cut off, and must flee away like a sha-

dow? Honour and obey your father and listen to him, for he considers your safety as the only remaining blessing that now can happen to him —When the king in his anger shall accuse us, I will bid him make me the scape goat or the sacrifice of expiation, and either be sent with scoff and scorn from the city to seek a tabernacle in the wilderness, or offer up my life to atone for our folly."

He ceased speaking. His languid eye, which had assumed a more resolute expression, was bent on the ground and he seemed occupied in silent prayer.

Mariamne gazed on him with affection and replied;

" Sleep would never again visit my eyes, and my right hand would forget her cunning, were I to suffer thy innocent gray hairs to be brought down with sorrow to the grave—Who could have left the city without the consent of the queen? I commanded preparations to be made: my reasons for so doing I will render unto my lord the king; if he is not satisfied therewith, let him spurn me like Vashti, let him cast me out like

Hagar—I will trust in my God, and rather endure shame, hunger, thirst, and be desolate than the innocent should suffer for my deeds, whether they be good or whether they be evil."

The friends of Mariamne felt their love and admiration for her increase, and were proud of having bestowed it on so noble a being.

Babarrah, whose unchanging eye had become moistened with an involuntary tear that struggled to follow the dictates of nature, said ;

" The clouds of adversity should never obscure the radiant light that now beams on us, and proves that there is left one queen of the earth whose true nobility diffuses a kindred warmth through our souls, and cherishes the dying hope that all below is not false and hollow. Were the spirits of the Maccabean brethren here they would hail and worship their noble daughter. Never shall the innocent suffer or the truly noble be wounded for me—I proposed the scheme, I held correspondence with the Roman, I was to have conducted the execution of the plan, and to me and to me alone can any blame be justly attached—I will defend myself before

my lord the king and if he deems me wrong, I shall submit to his decree, but I will deny the participation of any other in the intended removal from the city—Had the report of his death been true, that step would have proved the safest and the wisest that could have been adopted."

Dermah as if unwilling to have his words disputed, added with unusual emphasis;

"My husband has spoken the words of reason, and such as I knew would flow from his soul—I have assisted him in all he did, and if it be necessary shall accuse myself to Herod, for I am resolved that no human power shal. sever us—If the queen has to give her explanation, and does it before the enemy of her race poisons the royal ear, all will be well—if not so —then come what will; the Simoon blast of adversity has long since swept over me and so parched my soul, that floods of sorrow could never again, for my own sufferings, cause mine eyes to overflow."

The discussion might have been continued if an attendant had not called their attention by

repeated efforts to gain access to them : on her entering she prostrated herself before Mariamne and said ;

" The king draweth nigh, and long since his sister and a great company rode forth to meet him."

This intelligence saddened their countenances. The queen went to put on her best attire to receive him, the others returned to their abodes.

END OF VOL. II.

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